



#0

COVER A

MICHAEL TURNER'S
**FATHOM
BLUE
DESCENT**





#0

COVER B

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BLUE
DESCENT



DAVID SCHWARTZ
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pencils

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Aspen Matthews is a child of two worlds. Born amongst the Blue, an underwater race, she was raised on the surface among humans. As a marine biologist aboard the experimental DMD facility she was awakened to her true heritage. Aspen, along with the help of Cannon Hawke, Protector of the Elite Council of the Blue, foiled a plot by the Blue dissident Killian to destroy both the surface and undersea worlds. However, uncertainty remained concerning the events leading up to Aspen's remarkable appearance on the Paradise ocean liner, and the truth surrounding her parents below the surface—until now...



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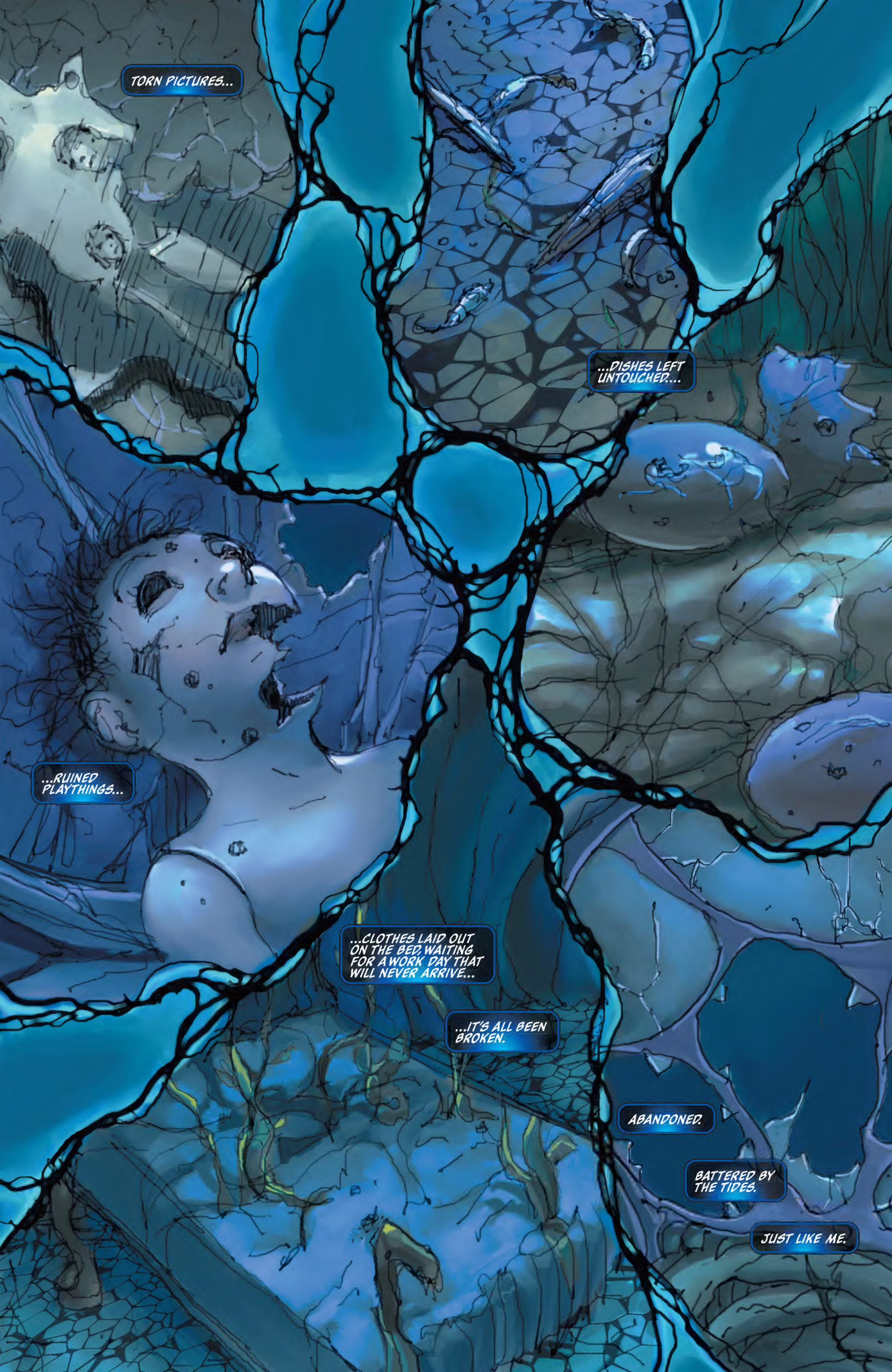
Opening the Floodgates

Fathom Created by
Michael Turner

The Black Co-Created by
Michael Turner and Peter Steigerwald

THIS IS MY
HOME.



A woman with dark hair and a distressed expression is lying in a bathtub. The bathtub is surrounded by a chaotic scene of broken glass, shattered plates, and other household items. The background shows a room with a tiled floor and a doorway leading to another room. The overall atmosphere is one of despair and abandonment.

TORN PICTURES...

...DISHES LEFT
UNTOUCHED...

...RUINED
PLAYTHINGS...

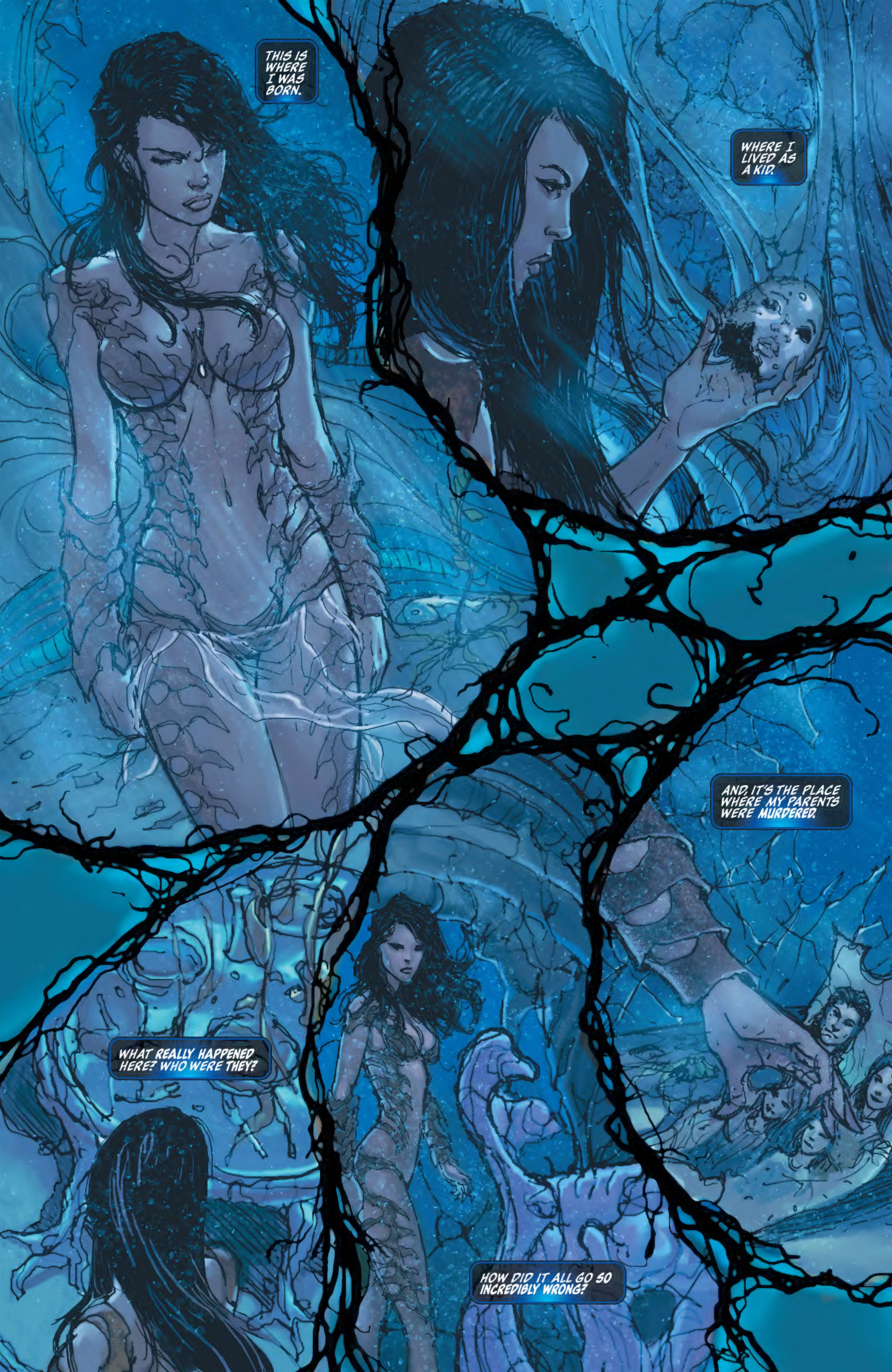
...CLOTHES LAID OUT
ON THE BED, WAITING
FOR A WORK DAY THAT
WILL NEVER ARRIVE...

...IT'S ALL BEEN
BROKEN.

ABANDONED.

BATTERED BY
THE TIDES.

JUST LIKE ME.



THIS IS
WHERE
I WAS
BORN.

WHERE I
LIVED AS
A KID.

AND IT'S THE PLACE
WHERE MY PARENTS
WERE MURDERED.

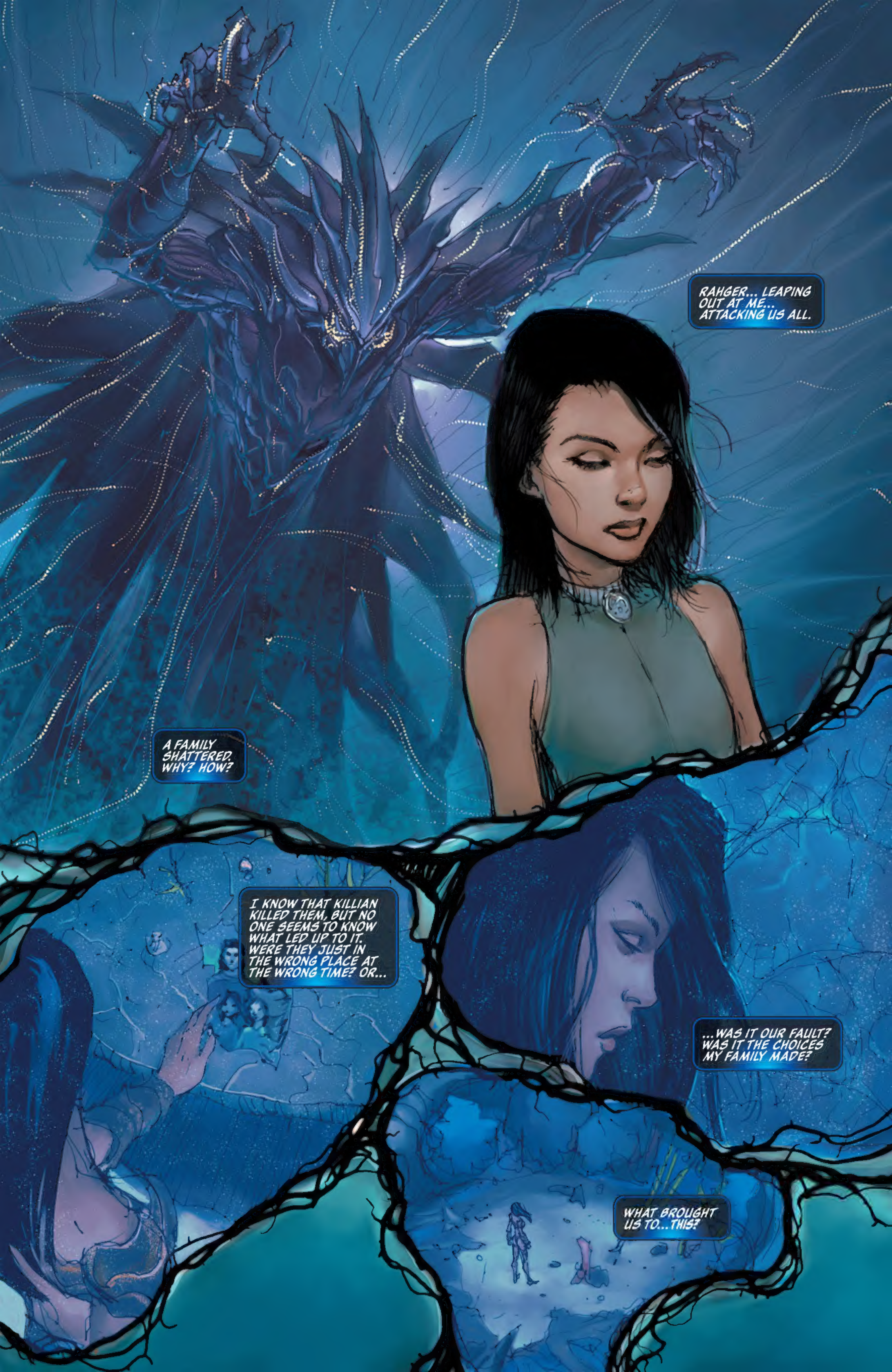
WHAT REALLY HAPPENED
HERE? WHO WERE THEY?

HOW DID IT ALL GO SO
INCREDIBLY WRONG?



THERE ARE ONLY
A FEW MEMORIES
I STILL HAVE OF
THIS PLACE.

MY MOTHER, FOR SOME
REASON, SPEAKING
TENDERLY WITH RAHGER.



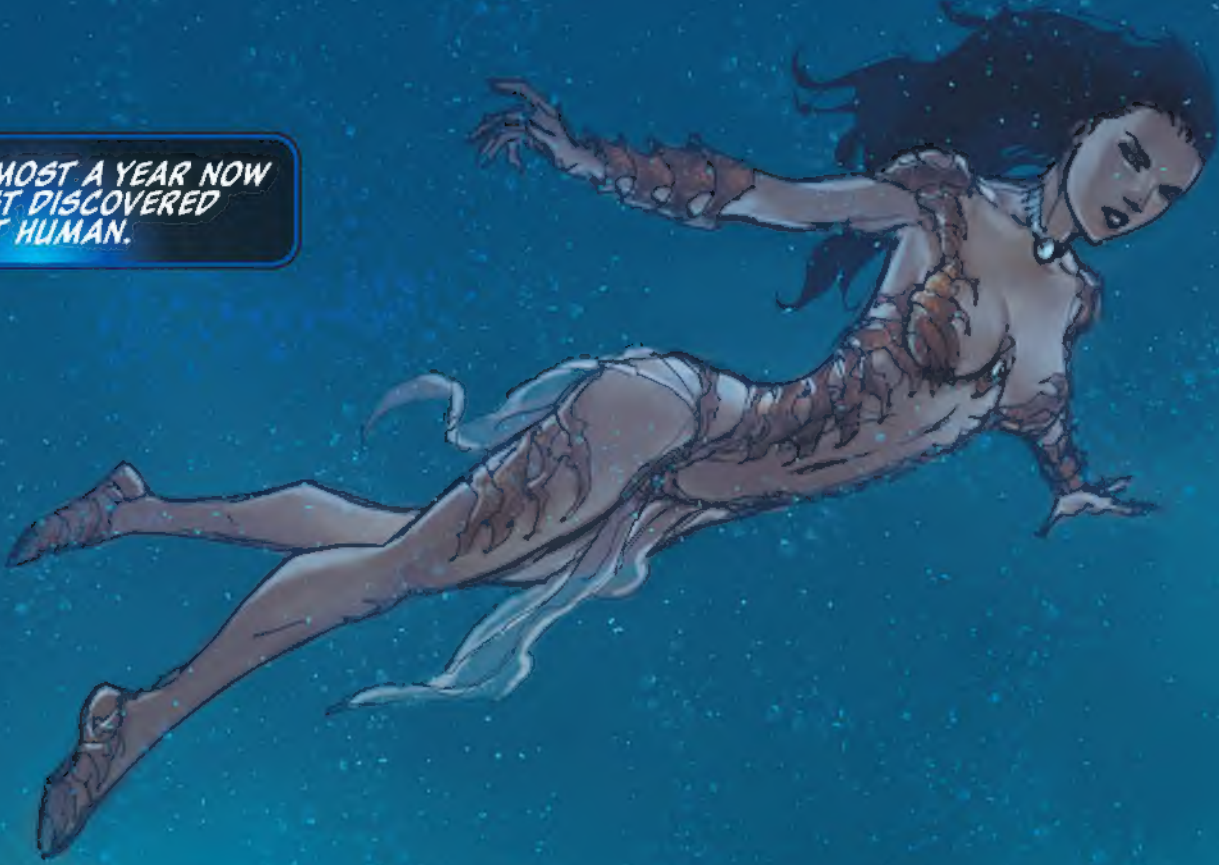
RAHGER... LEAPING
OUT AT ME...
ATTACKING US ALL.

A FAMILY
SHATTERED.
WHY? HOW?

I KNOW THAT KILLIAN
KILLED THEM, BUT NO
ONE SEEMS TO KNOW
WHAT LED UP TO IT.
WERE THEY JUST IN
THE WRONG PLACE AT
THE WRONG TIME? OR...

... WAS IT OUR FAULT?
WAS IT THE CHOICES
MY FAMILY MADE?

WHAT BROUGHT
US TO... THIS?



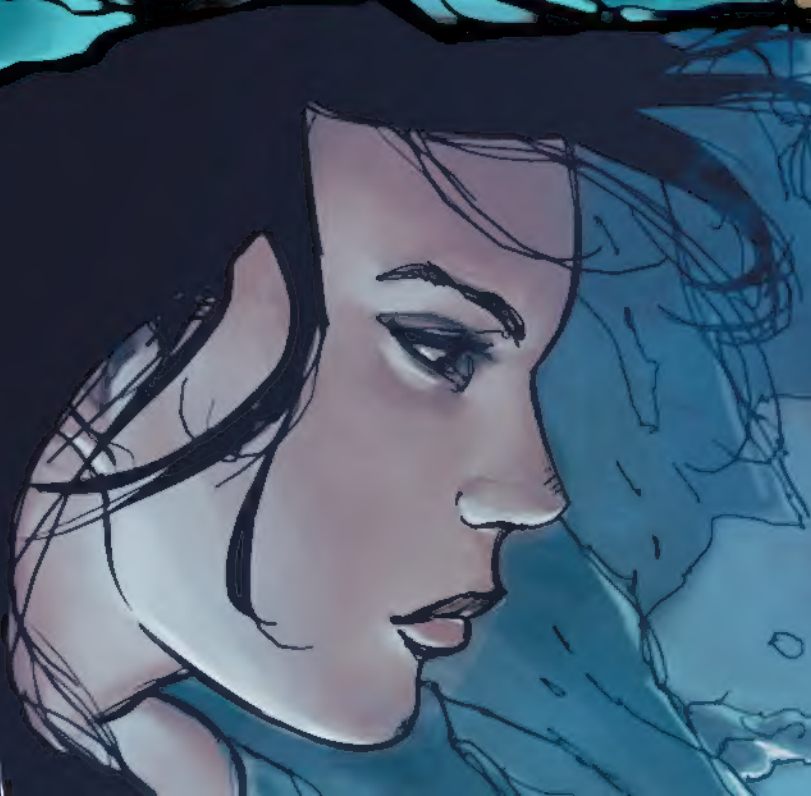
IT'S BEEN ALMOST A YEAR NOW
SINCE I FIRST DISCOVERED
THAT I'M NOT HUMAN.



I'VE SPENT THAT
YEAR BEING BULLIED
AND MANIPULATED...
FIGHTING... RUNNING,
CONSTANTLY AT WAR.
BEING PUSHED ALONG
BY THE TIDES OF FATE.



I HAVEN'T TAKEN ANY TIME
TO EXPLORE ALL OF THIS...
TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT
REALLY MEANS TO BE A
MEMBER OF THE BLUE. SO
MUCH BEAUTY HERE.



SUCH DEPTH...
HISTORY...
SPIRITUALITY.



I'M TOLD THAT MY MOM WAS A STORYTELLER. IN THEIR SOCIETY, STORYTELLING IS ONE OF THE MOST REVERED AND HONORED PROFESSIONS. WITHOUT THEM, THE BLUE'S ENTIRE HISTORY DISAPPEARS.

I GUESS IT'S IRONIC THAT, WITH HER GONE, MY OWN HISTORY HAS ALSO DISAPPEARED.

THIS WAS HER STAGE. OF THE FEW MEMORIES I STILL HAVE, SOME OF THE HAPPIEST WERE HERE.

MEMORIES OF MY MOM, LOOKING SO THRILLED AND EXCITED...



...BUT MAYBE...

...IF I HAD JUST
LOOKED A LITTLE
CLOSER...

...I'D HAVE
SEEN THAT
SOMETHING
WASN'T
QUITE RIGHT
WITH HER.

MAYBE I COULD'VE
DONE SOMETHING.
CHANGED OUR FATE.

WHAT WAS SHE
HIDING INSIDE?
DESPITE ALL
THOSE STORIES
SHE TOLD...

...WHAT WAS IT THAT
SHE WASN'T SAYING?



NO!

DAD, IS
MOM--

FINN, SHE'S
FINE. IT'S JUST A
NIGHTMARE.

GO BACK
TO SLEEP
NOW.

LOMA!

EILAH!
NO!!!

MOM...!



CANNON,
GET FINN AND
ASPEN OUT
OF HERE!

YOU TOO,
EILAH.

PLEASE
GO SOMEWHERE
HIDDEN. *SAFE.*

NOWHERE WILL BE
SAFE, LOMA. THEY'LL
COME AFTER ME.

AND, I'M
NOT LEAVING
YOU.

COME ON,
KIDS. STICK
CLOSE.



NO. THIS IS MY HOME, AND I'M NOT LEAVING. WE'LL STAND UP TO THEM. WE'LL STOP THEM ALL. THIS STORY WILL BE LEGENDARY...

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH OF THIS IS REAL, AND HOW MUCH IS MY MEMORY PLAYING TRICKS ON ME. IT'S ALL SO SCATTERED AND HAZY. WAS THE TRUTH ANYTHING LIKE THESE RANDOM SHARDS OF MEMORIES? CAN I REALLY TRUST ANY OF IT?



OK, MOM. IT'S TIME. TIME FOR YOUR
STORY TO BE TOLD. TIME FOR ME TO
FIND OUT THE TRUTH. THE TRUTH
ABOUT WHO YOU AND DAD WERE,
AND WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO YOU.

IF I'M EVER GOING TO FIGURE OUT WHO
I REALLY AM... IF I'M EVER GOING TO
STOP THIS CYCLE OF BEING USED,
TRICKED, LIED TO AND PUSHED AROUND...
IF I'M EVER GOING TO DISCOVER WHERE
I'M TRULY MEANT TO GO IN THIS LIFE...

...I NEED TO UNDERSTAND
WHERE I STARTED FROM.

AND THIS WHERE
IT ALL BEGINS...

TO BE CONTINUED...



TWELVE YEARS

FOR TWELVE YEARS, FATHOM fans have been wondering about Aspen Matthews' shrouded and mysterious past. Sure, there've been hints dropped here and there, but all we really knew was she was born of a Blue mother and a Black father, and that Killian had killed her Blue parents. But we never knew why, or how. Those two little bits of fleeting knowledge just raised more questions, and whetted our appetite to find out the full story. How did Aspen's mother end up involved with a member of the Black? Why did Killian want them dead? Who was Aspen's Blue dad, and how was he involved in all of this? Why was Cannon there when it all went down and why couldn't he save Aspen's parents from extinction?

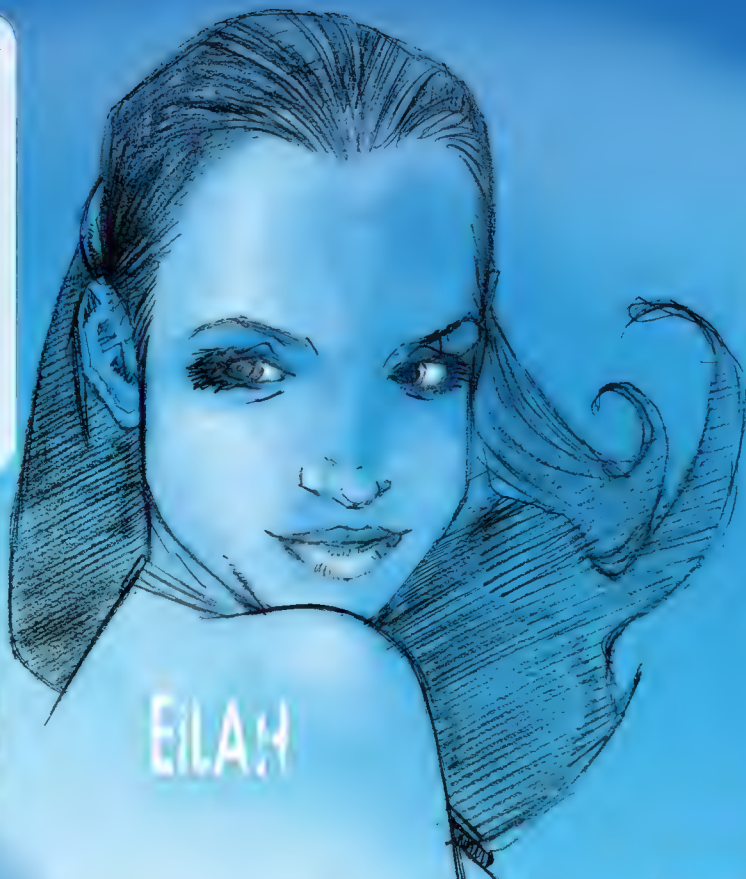
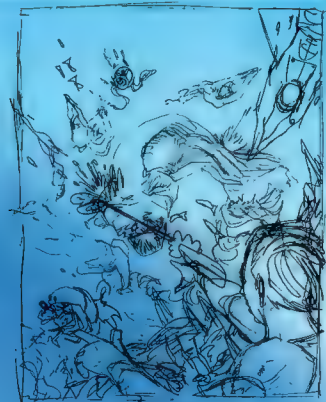
So many questions.

You, the Aspen fans, demanded answers.

Now, those answers come crashing down upon us in the upcoming pages of FATHOM: BLUE DESCENT. Over the next four issues, you'll learn the true story of Aspen's past, the facts you've been dying to uncover. Plus, you may even find out how Cannon first came to be Commander of the Elite Council Defense Force, or the true significance of Aspen's amulet, or how Killian got the idea for his massive Blue Sun plot, or any number of the Fathom universe's other hidden secrets.

Some very familiar faces will be back for BLUE DESCENT, including ASPEN, FINN, CANNON HAWKE, KILLIAN and RAHGER. But you'll also meet some of Fathom's hottest new characters in Aspen's mother EILAH, her Blue father ABESALOMA, their childhood friend turned arch-nemesis ZO, and many more.

And it'll all be visually sculpted by the amazing pencils of ALEX SANCHEZ. Here's a small taste of his work, but just wait'll you see the insanity that he brings to the adventurous pages ahead!

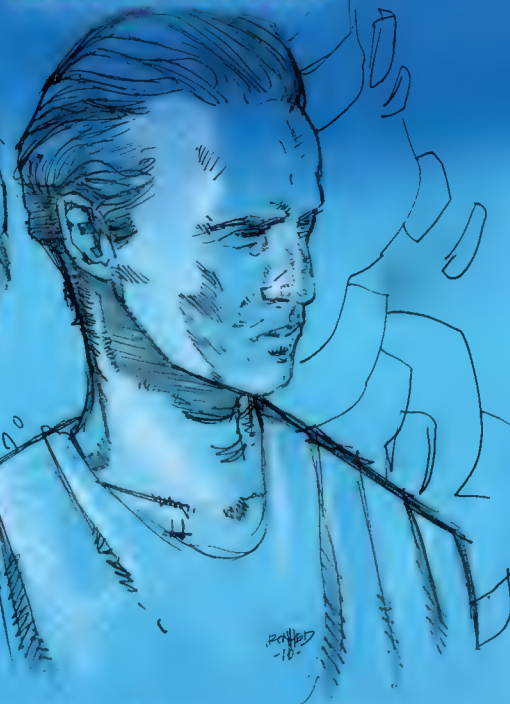


EILAH



ZO

ABESALOMA



KILLIAN



ASPEN

So join us back here in one short month, Fathom fans, and get ready for all-out underwater action and excitement, as we begin our Descent. But, be forewarned: we're giving you the answers you wanted, but for every answer you receive, you may be left with brand new questions to haunt you through Fathom's next 12 years...



CANNON



TO BE CONTINUED IN...

FATHOM
BLUE
DESCENT #1

ON SALE THIS SUMMER!



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OF 4
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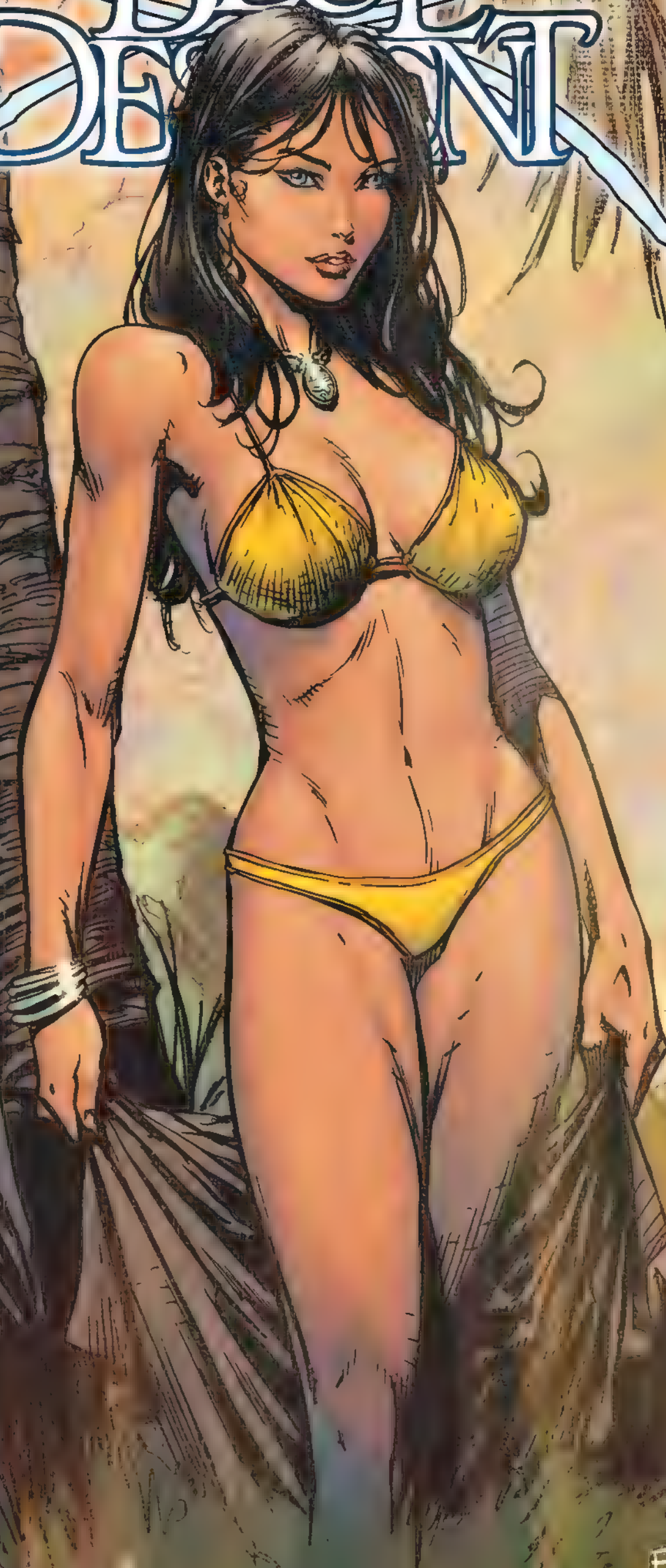




#1
OF 4
COVER B

MICHAEL TURNER'S

FATHOM BLUE DESERT



FINCH
2008

"Dreams and Disappearances"

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THAT GUY, HOLDING
THE GUN-- HE'S MY
BEST FRIEND, ZO.

ZO AND I HAVE BEEN
PRACTICALLY
INSEPARABLE SINCE
WE WERE FIRST BORN.

ME? I'M THE ONE HE'S
POINTING THE GUN AT.

I'M A MEMBER OF THE
ELITE COUNCIL, FROM
AN ANCIENT AND
RESPECTED FAMILY.

I'VE GOT AN INCREDIBLE
WIFE, AND TWO CHILDREN
WITH INFINITE POTENTIAL.

BUT NONE OF
THAT MEANS
ANYTHING
ANYMORE...

...BECAUSE I'VE
MADE POOR
CHOICES.

I IGNORED THE PEOPLE I SHOULD'VE
BEEN LISTENING TO AND CARING FOR.
I LET MYSELF GET TOO CAUGHT UP IN
THINGS THAT REALLY DIDN'T MATTER.
I LOST PERSPECTIVE.

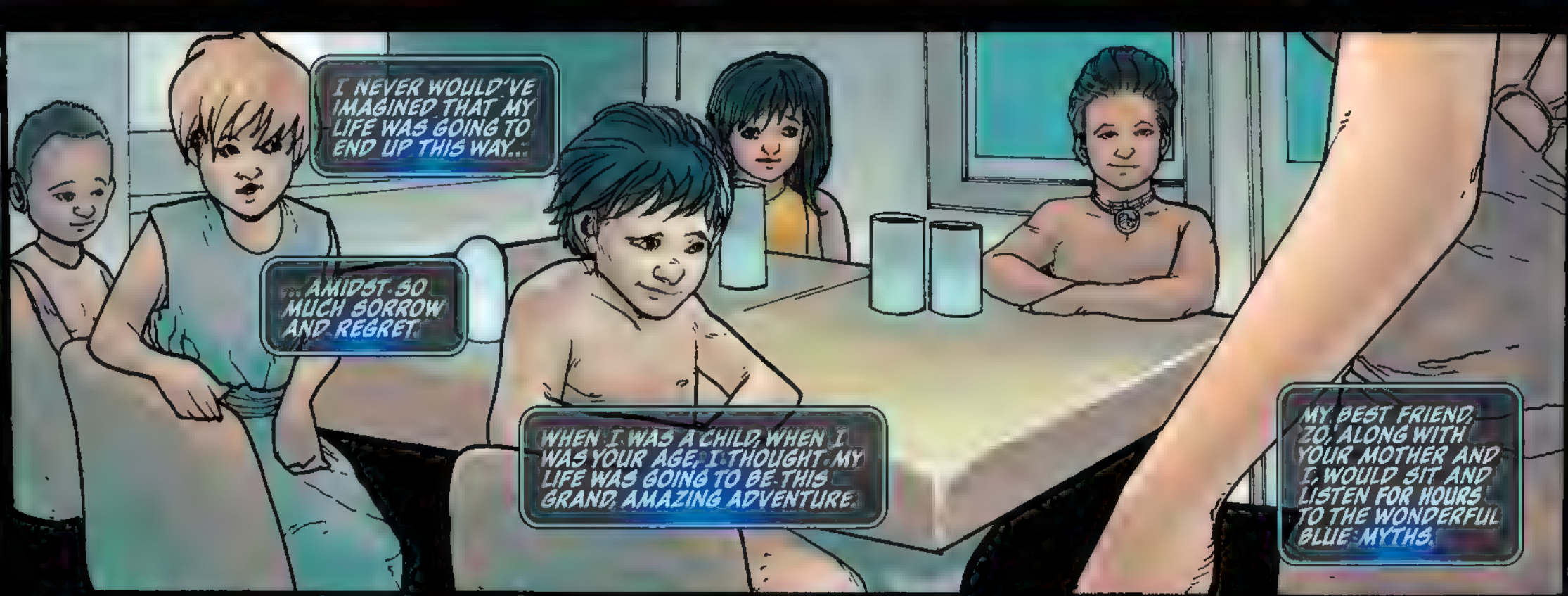
AND IT'S ABOUT TO
COST ME MY LIFE.

THERE'S SO MUCH I
NEED TO TELL YOU,
ASPEN, SO MUCH
YOU NEED TO KNOW.

BUT I HAVEN'T
MUCH TIME, AND
MY THOUGHTS
ARE CHAOTIC.

YOUR MOM'S THE GREAT
STORYTELLER, NOT ME.
BUT HOPEFULLY, YOU'LL
FIND THIS, AND HOPEFULLY
IT WILL MAKE SENSE.

I'LL SHARE
AS MUCH
AS I CAN...



I NEVER WOULD'VE
IMAGINED THAT MY
LIFE WAS GOING TO
END UP THIS WAY...

...AMIDST SO
MUCH SORROW
AND REGRET

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, WHEN I
WAS YOUR AGE, I THOUGHT MY
LIFE WAS GOING TO BE THIS
GRAND, AMAZING ADVENTURE

MY BEST FRIEND,
ZO, ALONG WITH
YOUR MOTHER AND
I, WOULD SIT AND
LISTEN FOR HOURS
TO THE WONDERFUL
BLUE MYTHS.

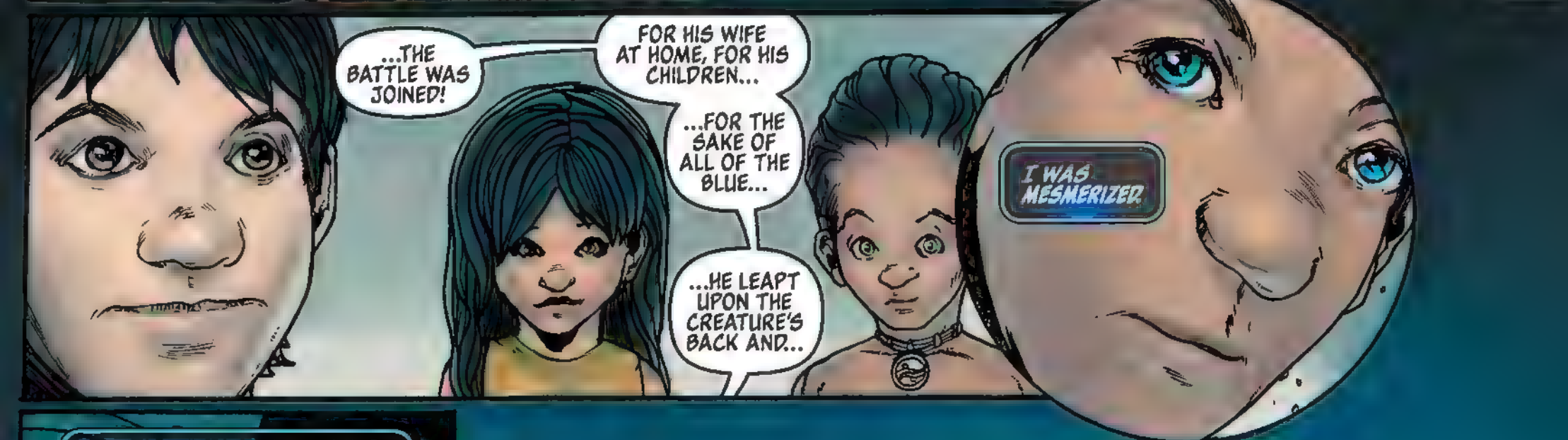


TALES OF
HEROIC,
GLORIOUS
TRIUMPHS
OVER THE
GREATEST
EVILS...

...AND THE WILDEST
CREATURES THAT
THE DEPTHS HAD
TO OFFER.

...AND WHO COULD HAVE
EVER FORETOLD THAT KOZAK,
LEADER OF THE BLACK, WOULD
ARRIVE JUST IN TIME TO SAVE
THE IMPERILED ELON FROM THE
MASSIVE JAWS OF THE
MONSTROUS SPROSTO?
YES...

WE ESPECIALLY LOVED STORIES
ABOUT THE ANCIENT, MYTHICAL
MEMBERS OF THE BLACK-- OUR
ANCESTORS-- THOSE WHO ARE
HOLDEST IN THE DEEPEST DEPTHS.



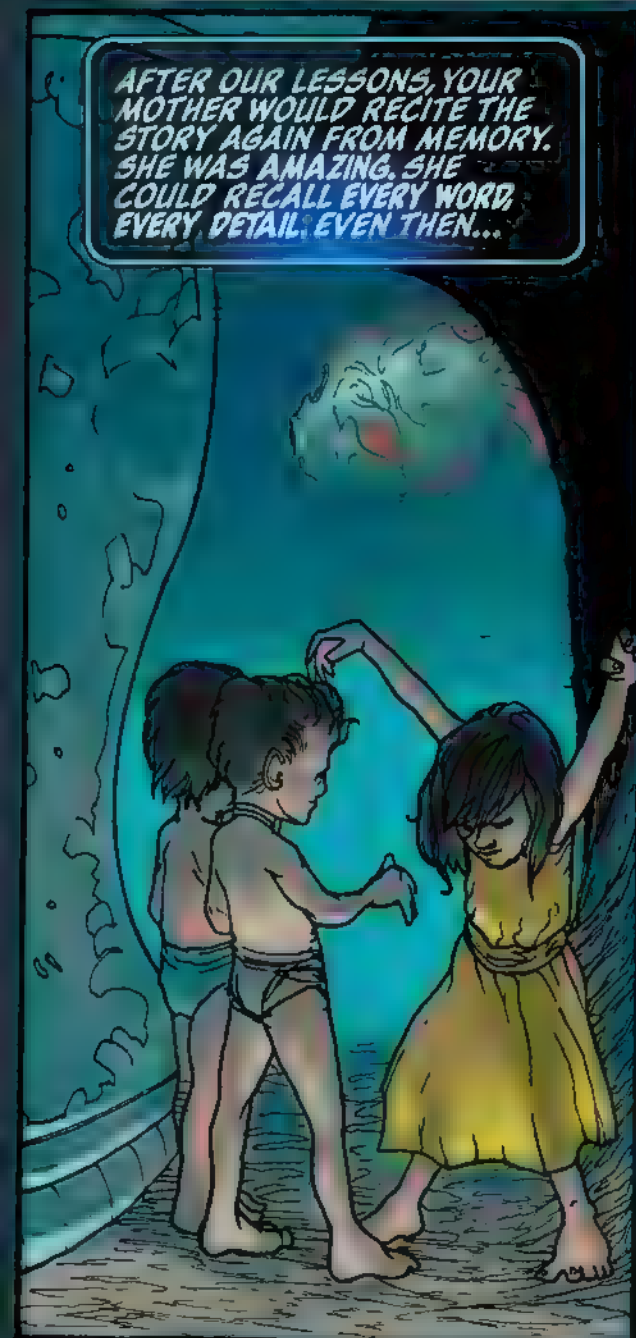
...THE
BATTLE WAS
JOINED!

FOR HIS WIFE
AT HOME, FOR HIS
CHILDREN...

...FOR THE
SAKE OF
ALL OF THE
BLUE...

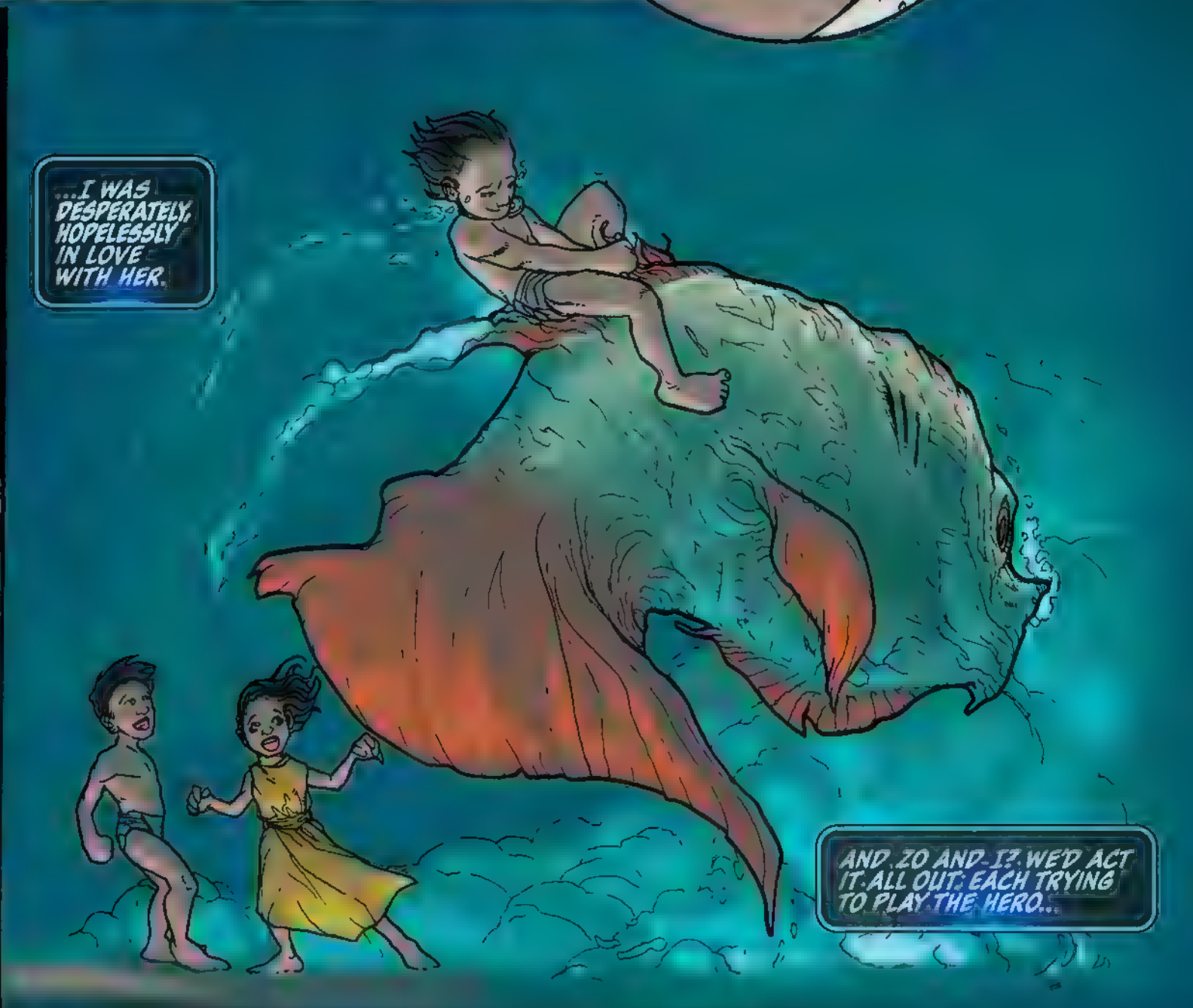
...HE LEAPT
UPON THE
CREATURE'S
BACK AND...

I WAS
MESMERIZED



AFTER OUR LESSONS, YOUR
MOTHER WOULD RECITE THE
STORY AGAIN FROM MEMORY.
SHE WAS AMAZING, SHE
COULD RECALL EVERY WORD,
EVERY DETAIL, EVEN THEN...

...I WAS
DESPERATELY,
HOPELESSLY
IN LOVE
WITH HER.



AND ZO AND I? WE'D ACT
IT ALL OUT, EACH TRYING
TO PLAY THE HERO...



...AND RESCUE
THE DAMSEL IN
DISTRESS.

THE SEA IS A DANGEROUS
PLACE. BUT THESE WERE
THE TWO PEOPLE I KNEW
I COULD ALWAYS TRUST
TO HAVE MY BACK.



WE NEVER SAID IT, BUT WE
ALL JUST KNEW THAT WE'D
BE FRIENDS FOREVER...

...THROUGH WHATEVER GREAT
CHALLENGES AND EPIC
ADVENTURES THAT LIFE AND
FATE MAY LAY BEFORE US.



DESPITE THE DANGER, WE ALL
LAUGHED HYSTERICALLY, HAVING
THE BEST OF TIMES, ENJOYING
THE ADVENTURE OF IT ALL.

BUT THEN, ALL THAT EXPECTED
ADVENTURE AND EXCITEMENT
SLOWLY SLIPPED AWAY AS WE
GREW OLDER.

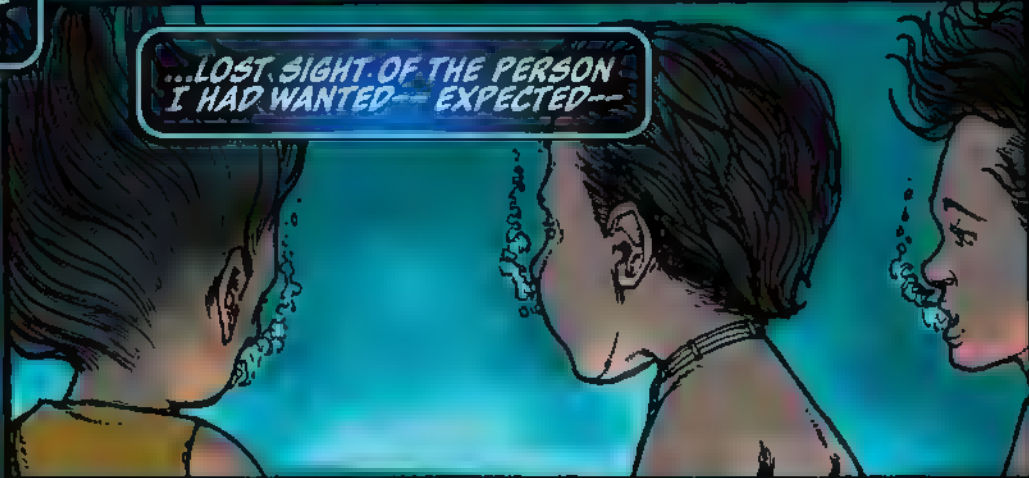
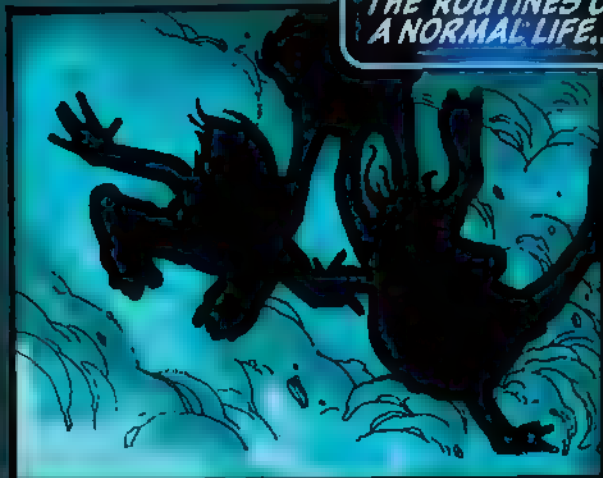


I SETTLED INTO
THE ROUTINES OF
A NORMAL LIFE...

...LOST SIGHT OF THE PERSON
I HAD WANTED— EXPECTED—

--DREAMED THAT
I WOULD BE

YES, MY DREAMS
HAD DISAPPEARED,
BUT THINGS WERE
WORSE FOR YOUR
MOTHER. FOR HER,
LIFE HAD BECOME...



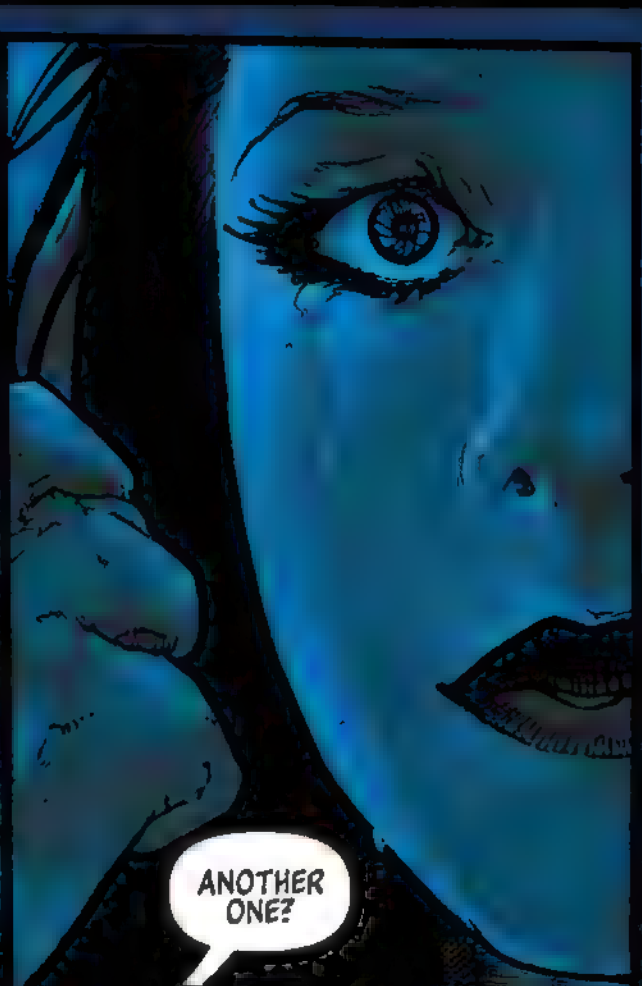
...A NIGHTMARE.

LEAVE...
ME...

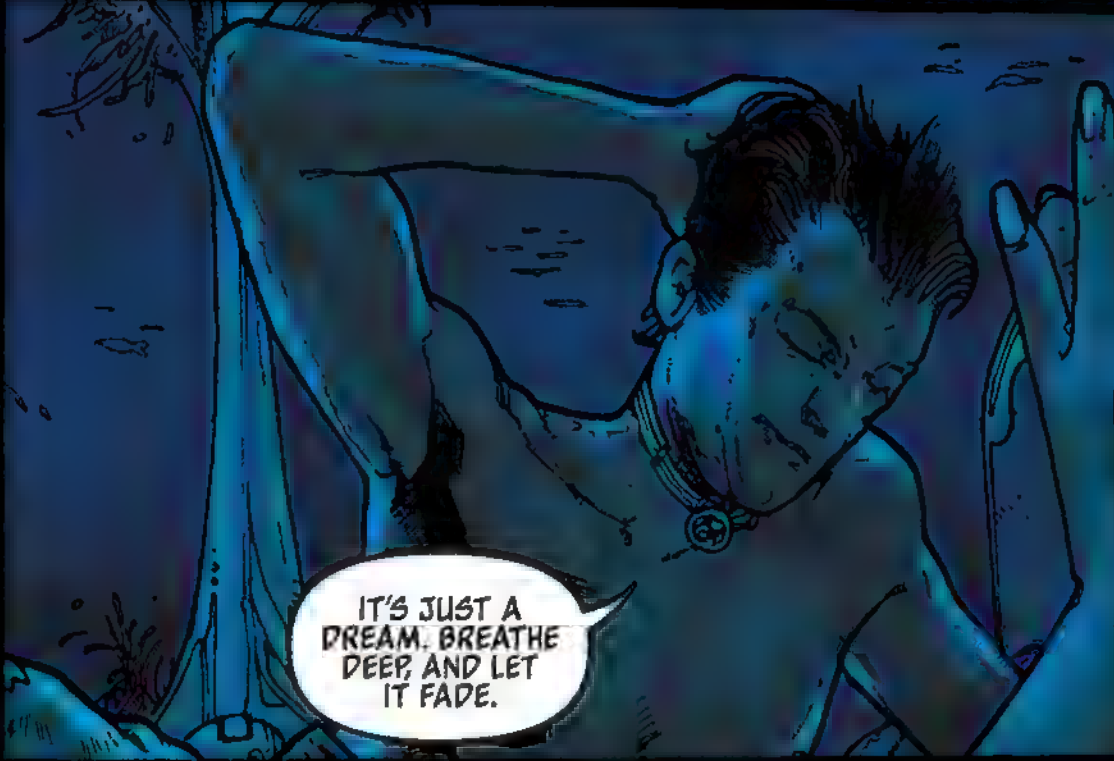
...ALONE!



LOMA! IT WAS ANOTHER NIGHTMARE... THE BLACK--



ANOTHER ONE?



IT'S JUST A DREAM. BREATHE DEEP, AND LET IT FADE.

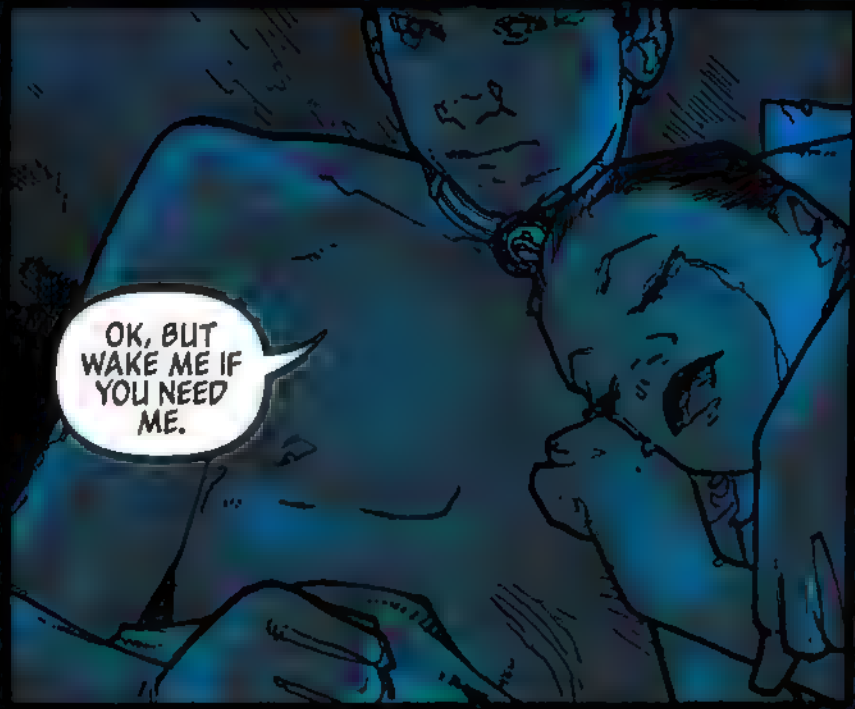


IT'S EVERY NIGHT, LOMA. IT'S GETTING WORSE. FOR SOME REASON, OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS, IT'S JUST-- I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE, I--

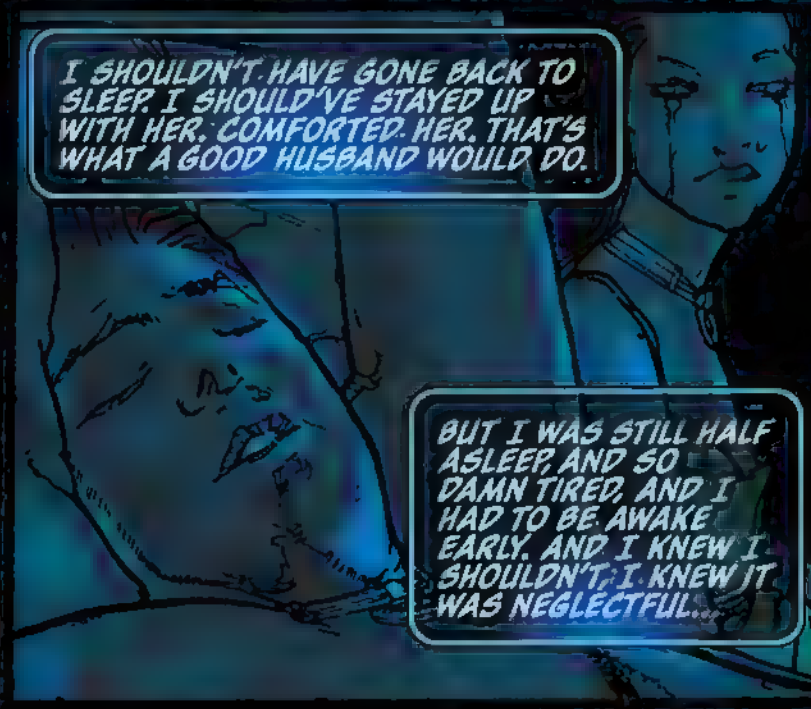


--IT'S OK. YOU'RE RIGHT, IT'S JUST A DREAM.

I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO SLEEP.

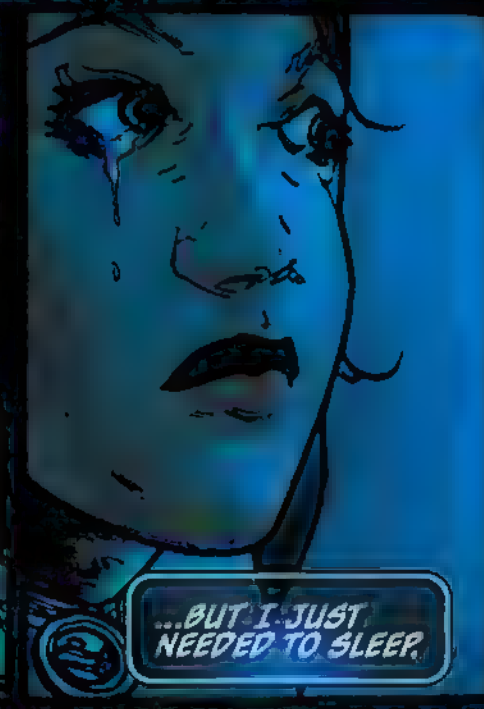


OK, BUT WAKE ME IF YOU NEED ME.



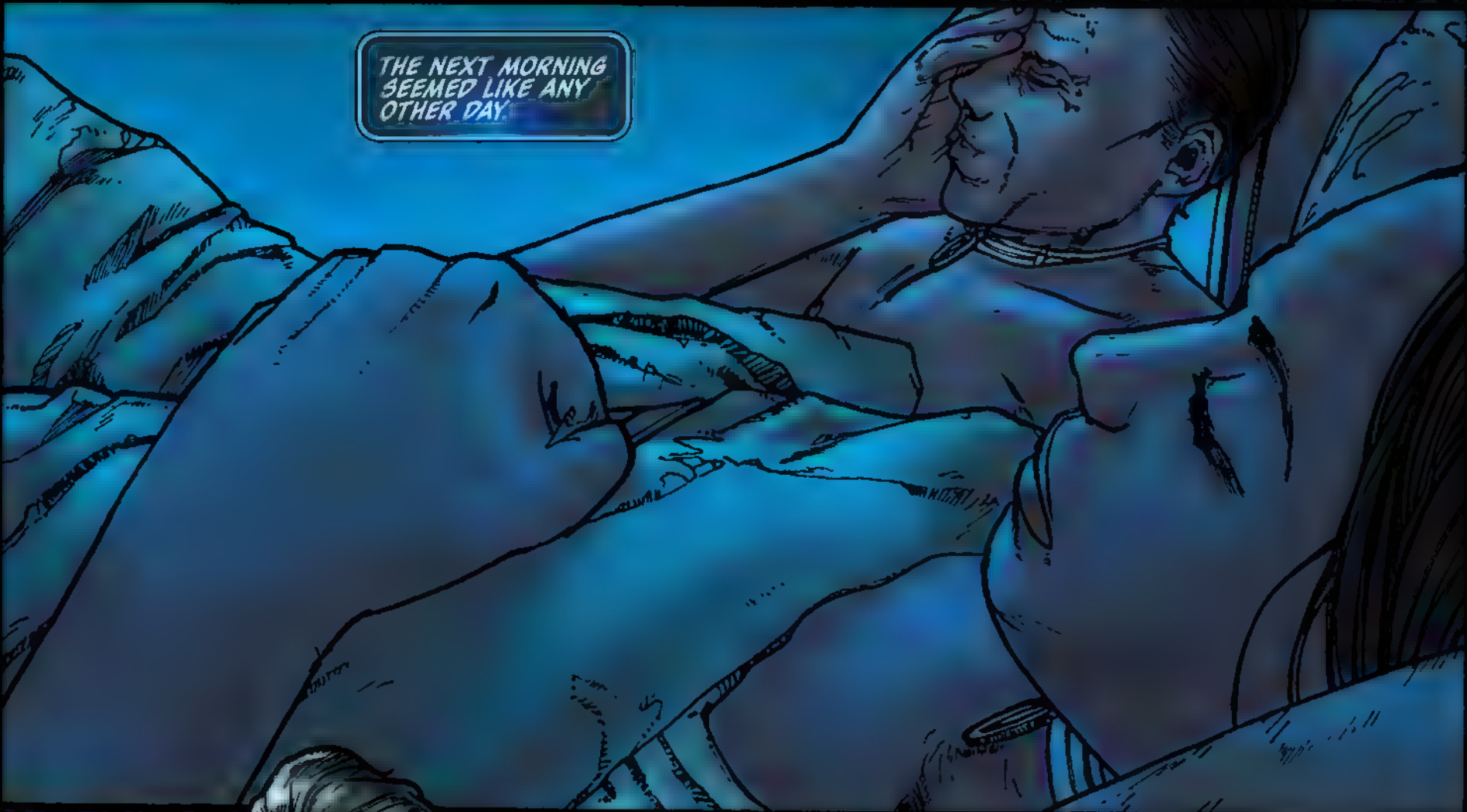
I SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE BACK TO SLEEP. I SHOULD'VE STAYED UP WITH HER. COMFORTED HER. THAT'S WHAT A GOOD HUSBAND WOULD DO.

BUT I WAS STILL HALF ASLEEP, AND SO DAMN TIRED, AND I HAD TO BE AWAKE EARLY. AND I KNEW I SHOULDN'T. I KNEW IT WAS NEGLECTFUL...



...BUT I JUST NEEDED TO SLEEP.

THE NEXT MORNING
SEEMED LIKE ANY
OTHER DAY.



IT CERTAINLY
BEGAN IN
MUNDANE
ENOUGH
FASHION.



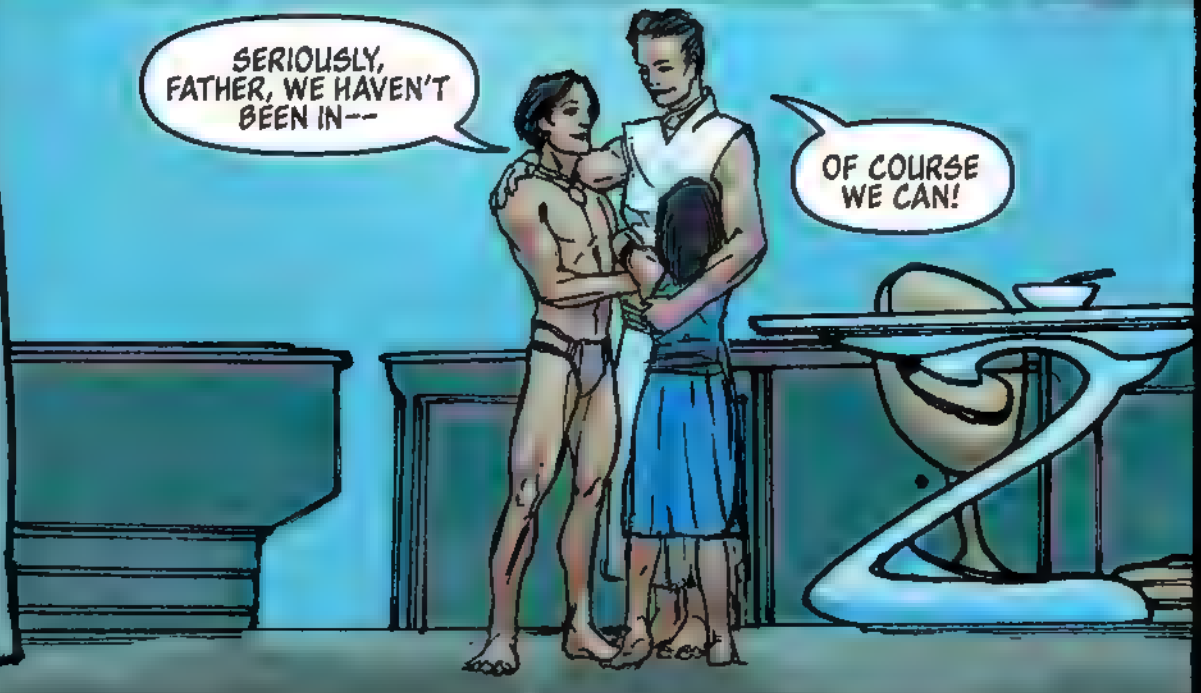
BUT THE WAY THIS
DAY WOULD END? I
COULD NEVER HAVE
POSSIBLY IMAGINED..



FATHER!
CAN WE GO TO
THE KEMP MAZES
TODAY, FATHER?
PLEASE! PLEASE
CAN WE?

SERIOUSLY,
FATHER, WE HAVEN'T
BEEN IN--

OF COURSE
WE CAN!





HOORAY!
FATHER TIME!!

BUT...



...JUST NOT
TODAY.

I WOULD LOVE TO TAKE
YOU, MORE THAN ANYTHING.
BUT I CAN'T TODAY. MAYBE IN A
FEW MORE CYCLES, AS SOON AS
MY WORK AT THE COUNCIL
SLOWS DOWN, I'LL FINALLY
BE ABLE TO--



IT'S ALWAYS
A FEW MORE
CYCLES.



CHILDREN, PLEASE
UNDERSTAND. BEING ON
THE COUNCIL ISN'T LIKE IT
WAS IN THE TIME OF MY
FATHER, AND HIS FATHER,
AND THE GENERATIONS
PRIOR.

BACK THEN, IT WAS
LARGELY A CEREMONIAL POST.
THE COUNCIL DID LITTLE... THERE
WAS LITTLE THAT EVER NEEDED TO
BE DONE. BUT, TODAY? IT'S JUST--
DIFFERENT. THE ANGER, THE DESIRE
TO ENGAGE IN A SUICIDAL FIGHT
AGAINST THE HUMANS,
IT'S--

--I NEED TO BE
THERE. TO HELP BRING
SOME SANITY-- BUT
SOON. WE'LL GO
SOON. I PROMISE.



I HATED DOING
THIS. I HATED
THAT I WAS
CONSTANTLY
PUTTING THE
COUNCIL AHEAD
OF YOU, FINN
AND YOUR
MOTHER.

I KEPT TELLING MYSELF
THAT ONE DAY, ONE DAY
VERY SOON, I WAS GOING
TO MAKE A CHANGE. BE A
BETTER MAN. A BETTER
HUSBAND AND FATHER.
FIND A BETTER BALANCE
IN MY LIFE.



I'M STILL WAITING FOR
THAT DAY TO ARRIVE.



THIS IS WHERE I SERVE
THE BLUE. I'M A MEMBER
OF THE COUNCIL, OUR
SUPREME RULING BODY.

I'M NOT THE BEST, OR THE MOST
POWERFUL, OR THE SMARTEST, BUT
MY FATHER WAS AN ELITE, AS WAS
HIS FATHER, AND HIS BEFORE THAT.

SO HERE I AM, BLESSED TO BE
A PART OF THIS GRAND BODY.
AND, PERHAPS, ONE DAY, YOU OR
FINN WILL BE TAKING MY PLACE.

KILLIAN!





ALTHOUGH
KILLIAN'S METHODS
MAY BE--- DEBATABLE---
HIS ENDS ARE CORRECT
AND HONORABLE.

OURS WAS ONCE A
SETTLED, *PEACEFUL* SOCIETY, A
SOCIETY OF ART, GRACE AND
HARMONY. BUT, TODAY, WE HAVE
ISSUES. *SERIOUS* ISSUES. ALL
OF WHICH ARE CAUSED
BY THE HUMANS.

EVEN
MY MOST---
DISGRUNTLED---
COLLEAGUES
CANNOT ARGUE WITH
THE FACT THAT
HUMAN INCURSION
ON OUR SOCIETY
HAS BECOME
A *SIGNIFICANT*
PROBLEM.

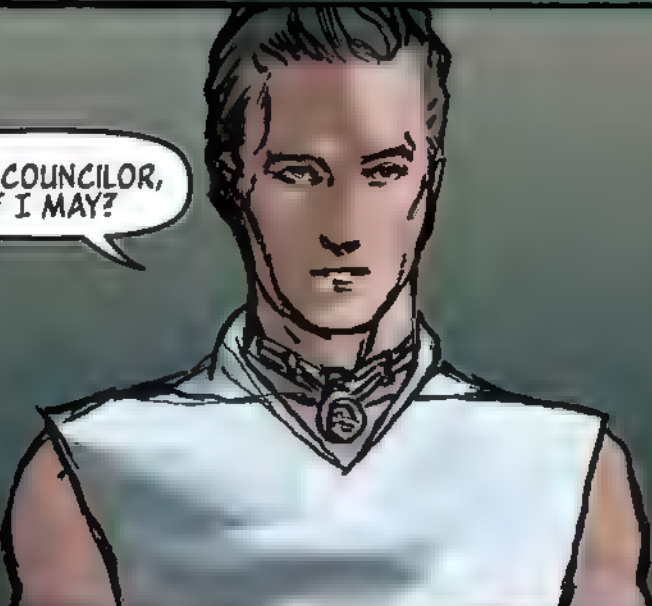
IF THEY WEREN'T
POLLUTING THE OCEANS, WE
WOULDN'T HAVE TO CHANGE
OUR CENTURIES-OLD FARMING
PROCESSES. IF THEIR SONAR
WASN'T PINGING THROUGH
OUR WATERS...

...WE WOULDN'T
HAVE TO SCUTTLE THE
TALL, BEAUTIFUL SPIRES
OUR FOREFATHERS
BUILT.

WE WOULDN'T
HAVE TO MOVE
DEEPER, INTO LESS
HOSPITABLE
WATERS.

PERHAPS KILLIAN AND
HIS GROUP OF--- SHALL I
CALL THEM "DISSIDENTS?"---
HAVE THE RIGHT IDEA.

PERHAPS WE DO
NEED TO "PACIFY" THE
HUMANS BEFORE THEY
CAN DESTROY US.



HIGH COUNCILOR,
IF I MAY?



OF COURSE,
COUNCILOR ABESALOMA.
OUR MINDS ARE
YOURS.

BUT WAR? AGGRESSION?
ATTACK? THESE ARE NOT THE
ANSWER. WE'RE BETTER THAN THAT.
THE BLUE HAVE GOT TO BE BETTER
THAN THAT. OUR ENTIRE HISTORY HAS
TAUGHT US THAT PEACE, TRANQUILITY,
MUTUALLY-SUPPORTIVE CO-
EXISTENCE, THESE ARE
THE ANSWERS.

WE CANNOT LET
FEAR CHANGE US. WE
CANNOT LET HATRED
CONSUME US. WE CANNOT
SACRIFICE THE CORE
PRINCIPLES THAT MAKE
US WHO WE ARE.

IF WE DO, WE WILL BE
BETRAYING ALL OF OUR
FOREFATHERS, ALL OF THE
BLUE WHO BUILT THIS GREAT
HALL, AND ESTABLISHED
THIS GREAT SOCIETY.

I REFUSE TO BELIEVE
THAT ALL HUMANS ARE
BARBARIC. AFTER ALL, WE'VE ALL
GROWN FROM THE SAME SPARK. IF
WE CAN SPEAK TO THE PURITY
WITHIN THEM, IF WE CAN WORK
WITH THEM, TEACH THEM, GUIDE
THEM, THEN THEY COULD BE
POWERFUL ALLIES.

WE COULD ALL
WORK TOGETHER TO
SAVE OUR WORLD, TO
EXPLORE AND INVENT, TO
USHER IN AN INCREDIBLE,
UNPARALLELED
GOLDEN AGE.

IMAGINE THE
THINGS WE COULD
ACCOMPLISH, OUR
LEARNING, OUR
SCIENCE, COMBINED
WITH THEIRS?



MY OLD FRIEND ZO IS
CORRECT. THE HUMANS ARE,
POTENTIALLY, A THREAT TO
US, TO OUR CIVILIZATION, AND
TO OUR CENTURIES-OLD
WAY OF LIFE.



ABESALOMA, FORGIVE ME, MY FRIEND, BUT YOU ARE SADLY MISGUIDED HERE. NO HUMAN CAN *EVER* BE TRUSTED. THEY ARE A *HOSTILE, WAR-DRIVEN* RACE. IT'S IN THEIR BLOOD, THEY--

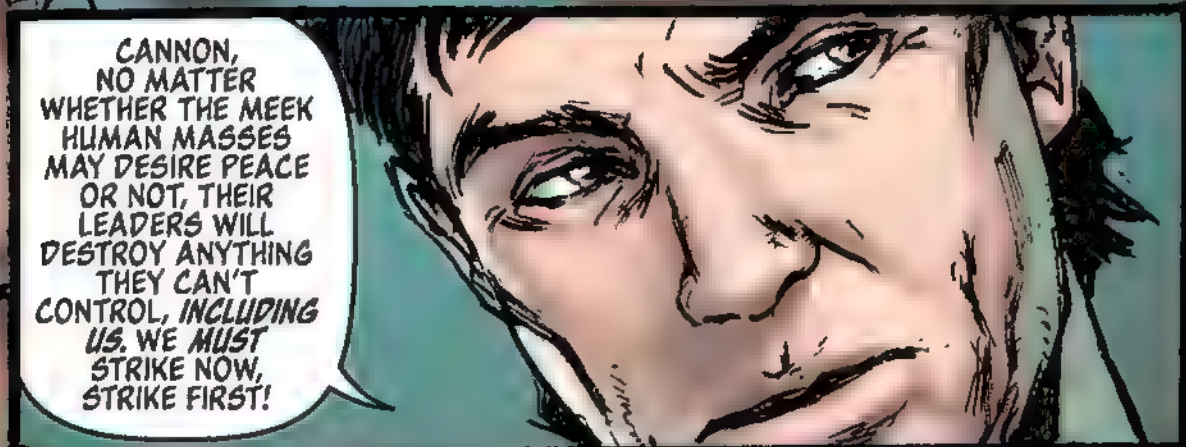
I BEG YOUR PARDON, HIGH COUNCILOR, AND PLEASE FORGIVE MY INTERRUPTION, BUT MY DUTIES AS A MEMBER OF THE GUARD REQUIRE THAT MUCH OF MY TIME IS SPENT WITH THE HUMANS.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MY EXPERIENCE WITH THEM DIFFERS GREATLY FROM THE MANNER IN WHICH COUNCILOR ZO DESCRIBES THEM.

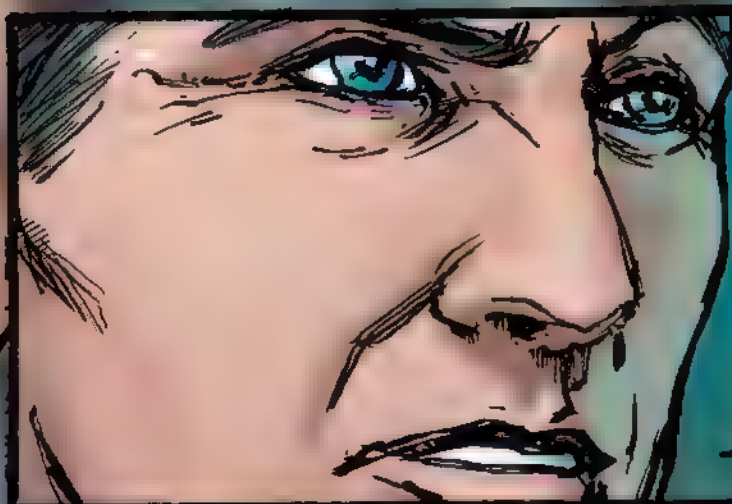
MOST WANT THE SAME THINGS WE DO... SAFETY, HAPPINESS, PURITY OF SPIRIT AND PURPOSE. THEY ARE CAPABLE OF GREAT ARTISTRY, *TREMENDOUS BEAUTY.*

ALL OF THE *INNOVATIONS* THEY CAN CREATE, ALL OF THE *GOOD* THEY COULD DO. I AGREE WITH COUNCILOR ABESALOMA... IF ONLY THE BLUE COULD HELP GUIDE THEM--

CANNON, NO MATTER WHETHER THE MEEK HUMAN MASSES MAY DESIRE PEACE OR NOT, THEIR LEADERS WILL DESTROY ANYTHING THEY CAN'T CONTROL, *INCLUDING US.* WE *MUST* STRIKE NOW, STRIKE FIRST!



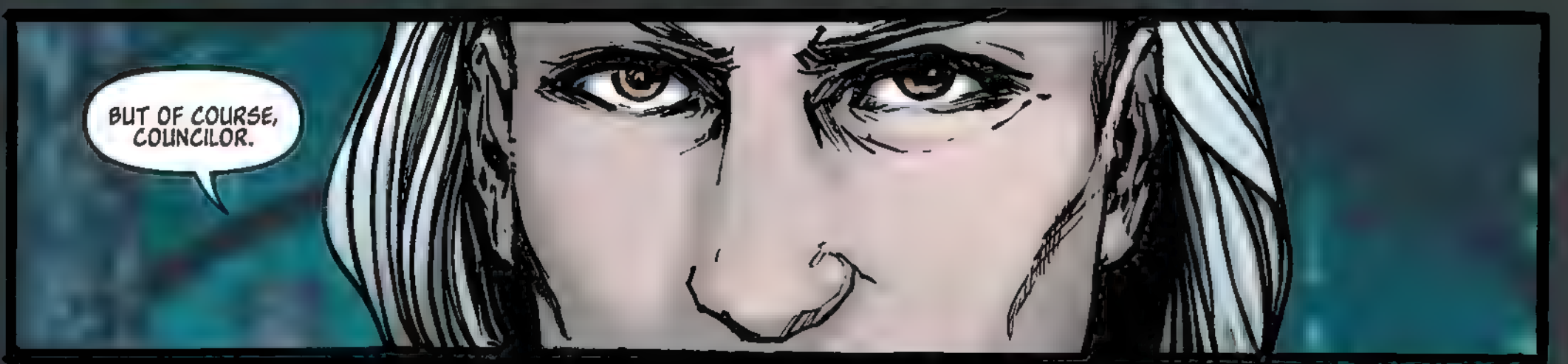
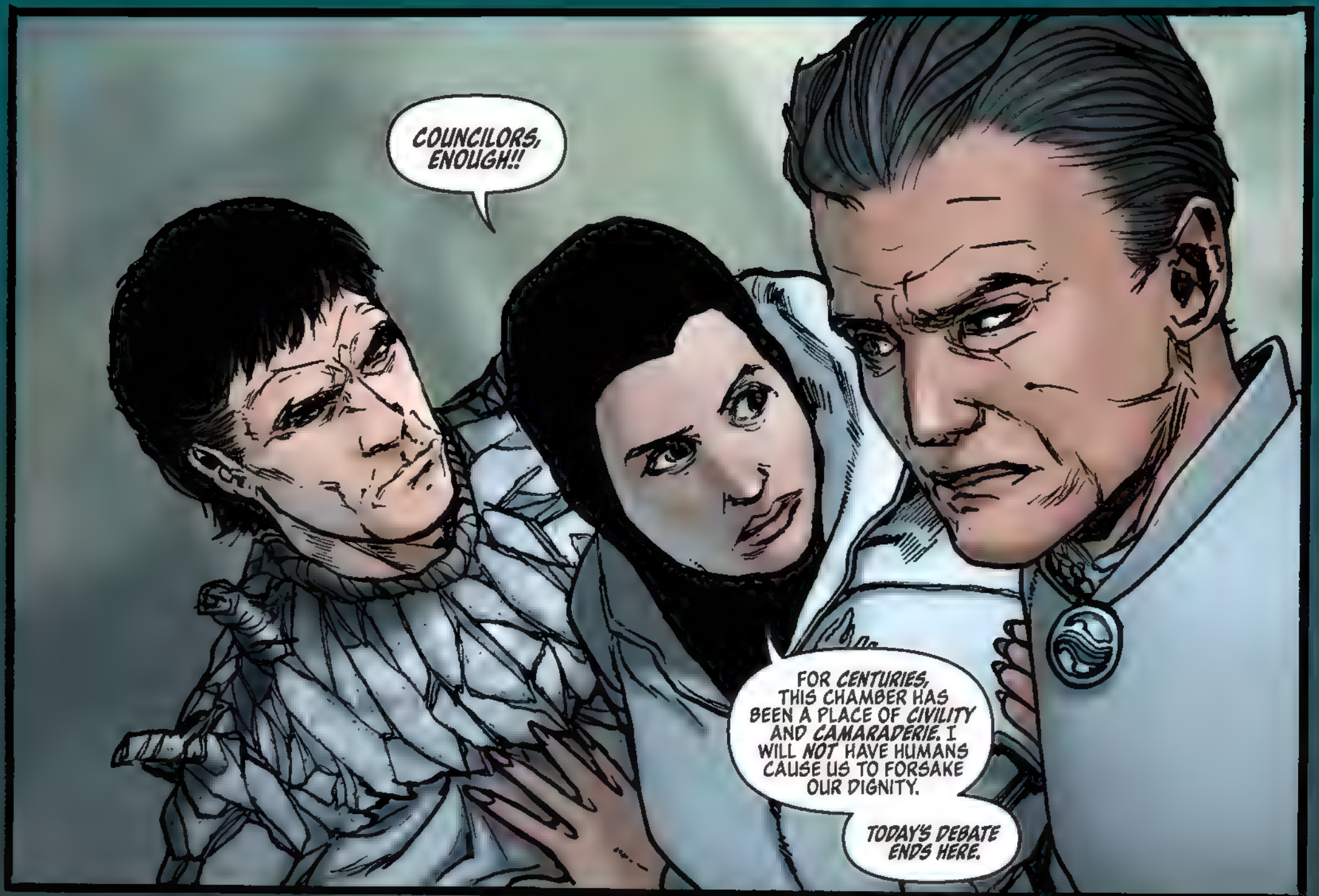
AND THEN WHAT? WATCH OUR CITIES BE DESTROYED ONE BY ONE AS THEY RETALIATE AGAINST US? EVEN OUR STRONGEST POWERS AND WEAPONS CAN'T MATCH THE COMBINED FIREPOWER OF HUMANITY. YOUR WAY IS SUICIDE, IT'S FOOLISHNESS! IF WE GO TO WAR, WE *LOSE*, AND THEN YOU CAN JUST WRITE OFF THE *ENTIRE PLANET--*



HOW DARE YOU BLASPHEME THE POWER OF THE ELITE?! TOGETHER, WE HAVE POWER IMMEASURABLE! THE BLACK HAVE IMBUED US WITH--

ALL OF THE ELITE COMBINED ARE STILL *NOTHING* COMPARED TO THE POWER OF THEIR WEAPONS! WE CAN THROW WAVE AFTER WAVE OF WATER AT THEIR COASTS, BUT IF EVEN ONE NUCLEAR WARHEAD IS LAUNCHED FROM INLAND--







WE CANNOT KEEP RUNNING AND HIDING. WE CANNOT SIT BACK AND WAIT WHILE THE HUMAN FORCES MASS AGAINST US.



AND, WITH ALL DUE RESPECT TO COUNCILOR ABESALOMA, DIPLOMACY IS SIMPLY TOO GREAT A RISK.

IF DIPLOMACY FAILS, WE'LL HAVE REVEALED OURSELVES, AND WE'LL BE VULNERABLE.



DON'T YOU MEAN "IF" WE STRIKE?



OF COURSE. HOW SILLY OF ME. THE DISCUSSION SHALL CONTINUE. NOTHING IS DECIDED THIS DAY.

ZO AND ABESALOMA... I HOPE THAT OUR NEXT SESSION WILL BE MORE CIVILIZED. LET US NOT DEVOLVE TO THE LEVEL OF THOSE WHOSE HOSTILITY CAUSES OUR DEBATE.

MY DAY WAS AWFUL... FRUSTRATING...
MADDENING. EVERYTHING I BELIEVED
IN, FOUGHT FOR, WAS SLIPPING AWAY.

YOUR MOTHER'S
WAS WORSE.

THERE'S NOTHING
PHYSICALLY WRONG
WITH YOU.

YOU'RE A STORYTELLER,
YES? YOU KNOW AND RE-TELL
ALL OF OUR CULTURE'S DEEPEST
MYTHS AND LEGENDS? STORIES
WHICH OFTEN INCLUDE
THE BLACK?

PERHAPS THESE
NIGHTMARES ARE SIMPLY
ALL THE STORIES YOU HOLD
WITHIN TRYING TO WORK
THEIR WAY OUT?

OR, THESE
NIGHTMARES
MAY REFLECT DEEP
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ISSUES.

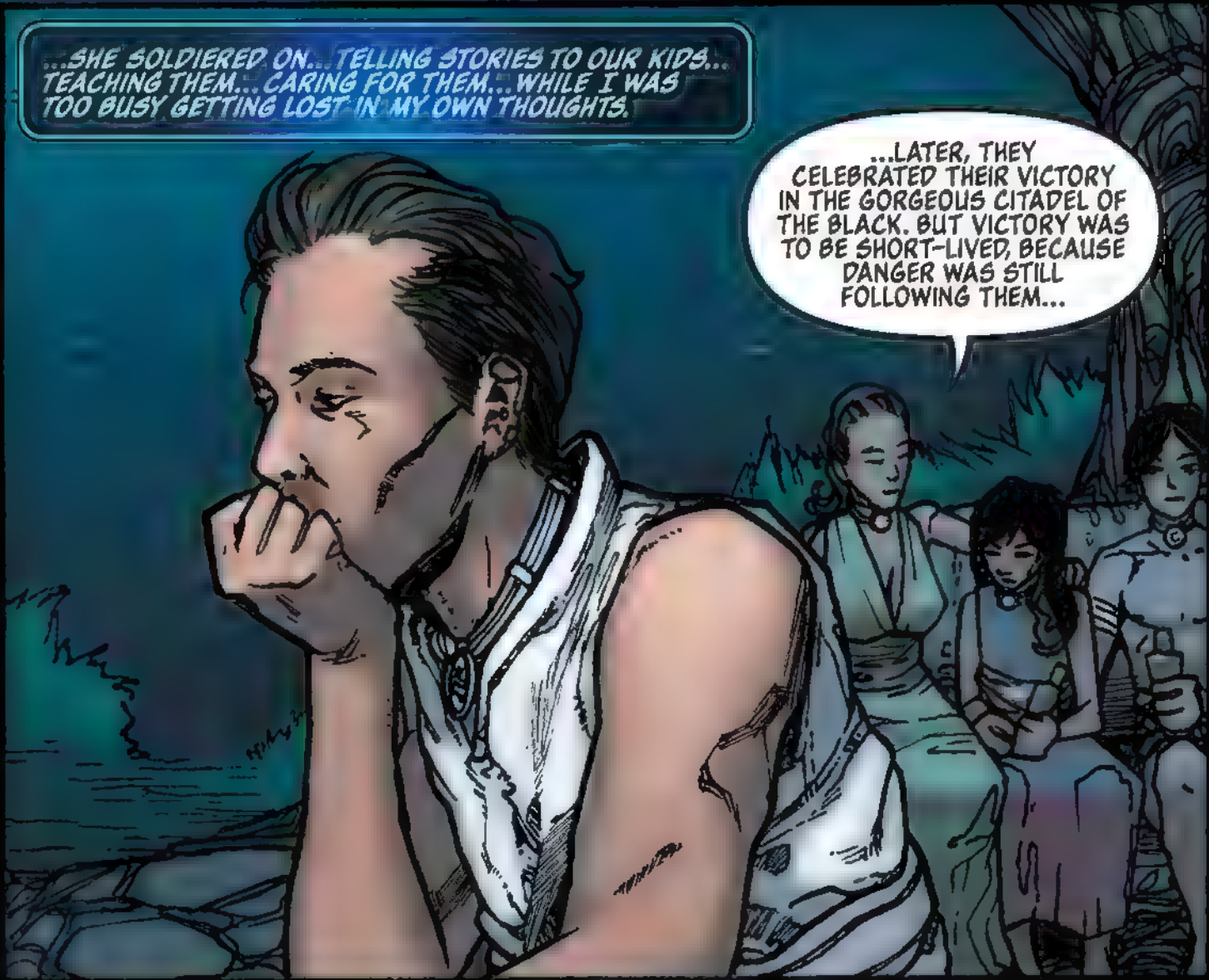
OR, THEY MAY
NOT BE NIGHTMARES
AT ALL.

THEY MAY BE
REAL EVENTS ACTUALLY
TAKING PLACE WHILE YOU
PERCEIVE YOURSELF TO
BE ASLEEP.

AFTER ALL, NONE OF
THE BLUE CAN EVER TRULY
KNOW OR UNDERSTAND
THE MACHINATIONS OF
THE BLACK.

PERHAPS YOU
TRULY ARE BEING
VISITED...

YET, DESPITE
IT ALL...



...SHE SOLDIERED ON... TELLING STORIES TO OUR KIDS... TEACHING THEM... CARING FOR THEM... WHILE I WAS TOO BUSY GETTING LOST IN MY OWN THOUGHTS.

...LATER, THEY CELEBRATED THEIR VICTORY IN THE GORGEOUS CITADEL OF THE BLACK. BUT VICTORY WAS TO BE SHORT-LIVED, BECAUSE DANGER WAS STILL FOLLOWING THEM...



FATHER...?

LEAVE HIM ALONE, CHILDREN. LET HIM WORK.



LATER...

I WENT TO SEE THE HEALER TODAY, ABOUT THOSE NIGHTMARES.



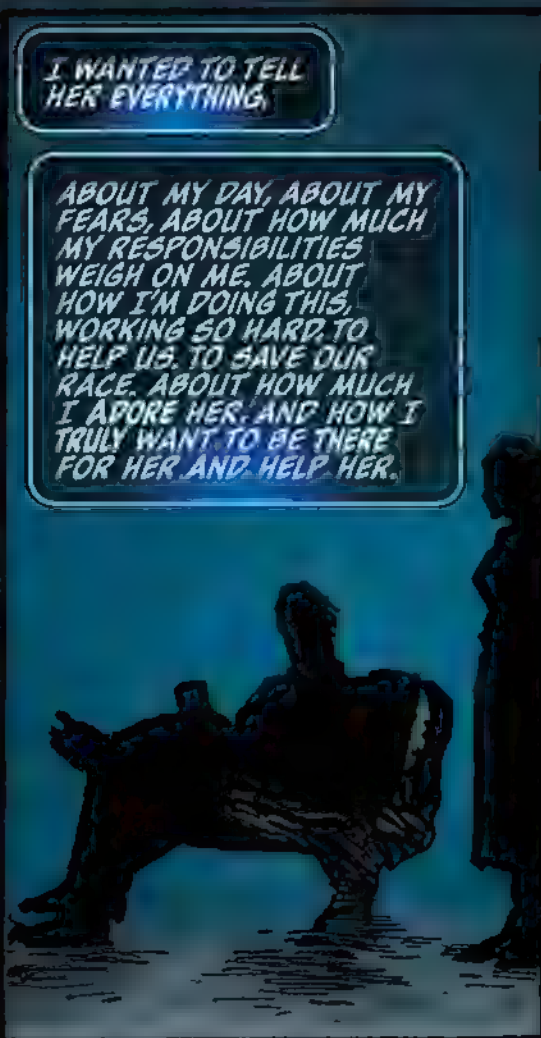
SHE THINKS THEY MAY BE MORE THAN JUST DREAMS. THEY COULD BE--



NOT TONIGHT. I JUST... NOT TONIGHT.

I MEAN, I WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT, BUT TODAY WAS...

...LET'S TALK TOMORROW.



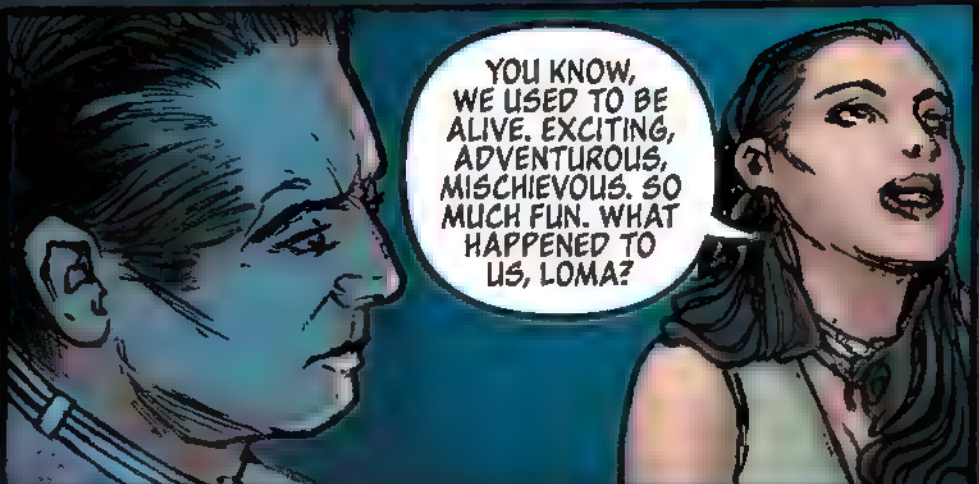
I WANTED TO TELL HER EVERYTHING.

ABOUT MY DAY, ABOUT MY FEARS, ABOUT HOW MUCH MY RESPONSIBILITIES WEIGH ON ME. ABOUT HOW I'M DOING THIS, WORKING SO HARD TO HELP US. TO SAVE OUR RACE. ABOUT HOW MUCH I ADORE HER. AND HOW I TRULY WANT TO BE THERE FOR HER AND HELP HER.



BUT I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. SO, I SIMPLY SAID...

I'LL DO BETTER TOMORROW. I KNOW I NEED TO TRY HARDER.



YOU KNOW, WE USED TO BE ALIVE. EXCITING, ADVENTUROUS, MISCHIEVOUS. SO MUCH FUN. WHAT HAPPENED TO US, LOMA?

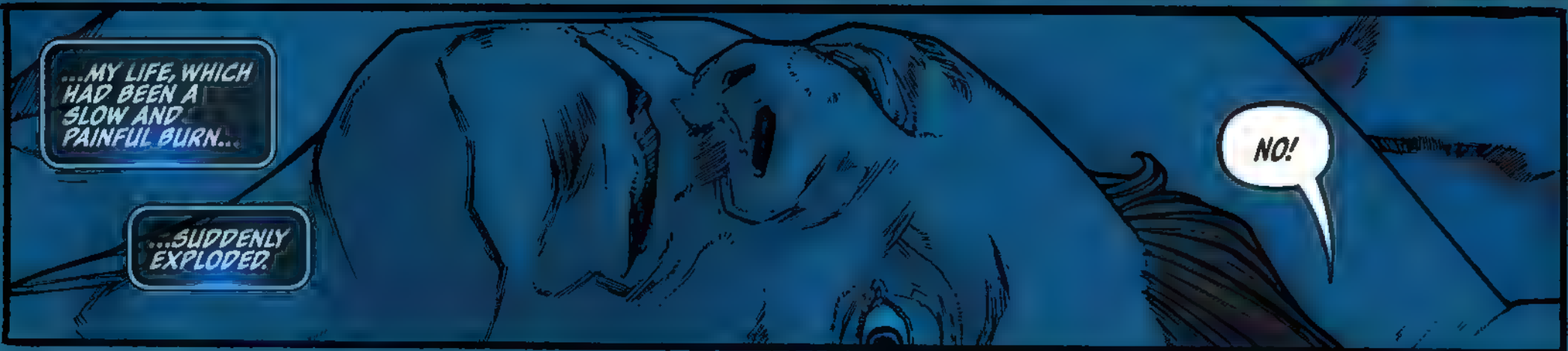
LATER THAT NIGHT...



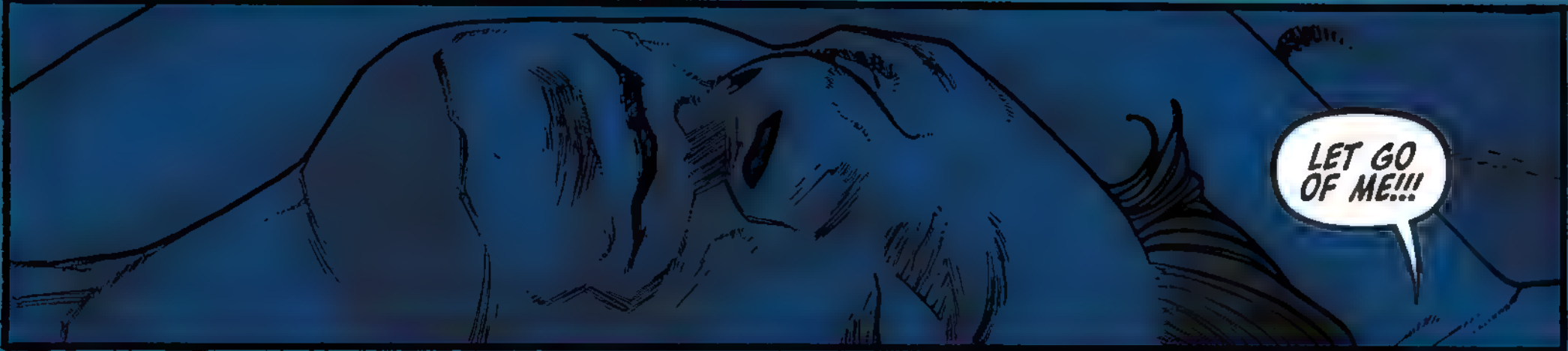
...MY LIFE, WHICH
HAD BEEN A
SLOW AND
PAINFUL BURN...

...SUDDENLY
EXPLODED

NO!



LET GO
OF ME!!!



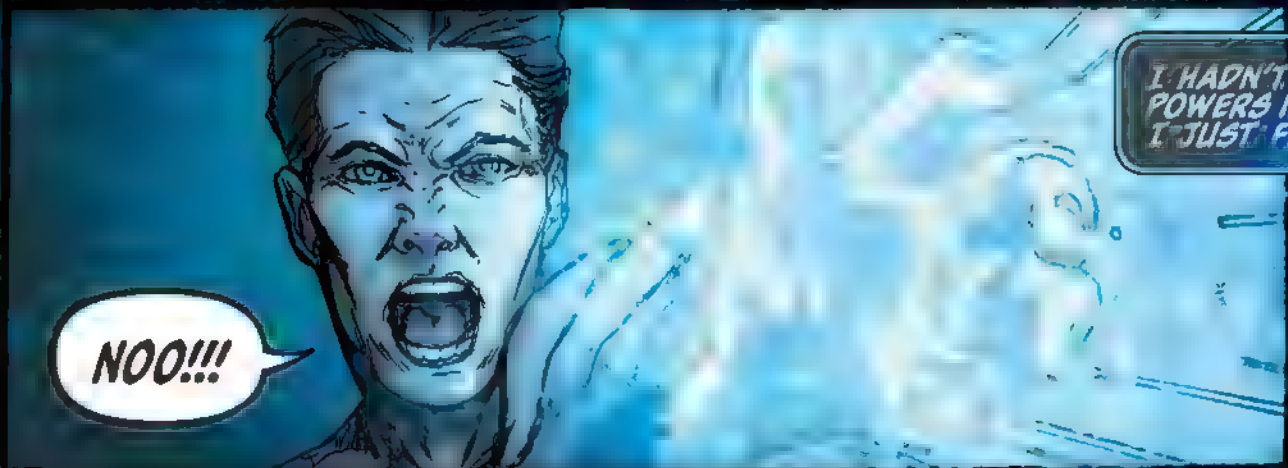
NOT AGAIN,
EILAH, I--





WHAT?!?

EILAH...



NOO!!!



I HADN'T USED MY
POWERS IN SO LONG.
I JUST FIRED WILDLY.



REACHING OUT TO HER FOR DEAR LIFE, DESPERATE TO SAVE HER, TO BE A HERO LIKE IN ONE OF THE STORIES FROM MY CHILDHOOD...

...BUT I COULDN'T. MY WIFE, MY MATE, MY SOUL, YOUR MOTHER...



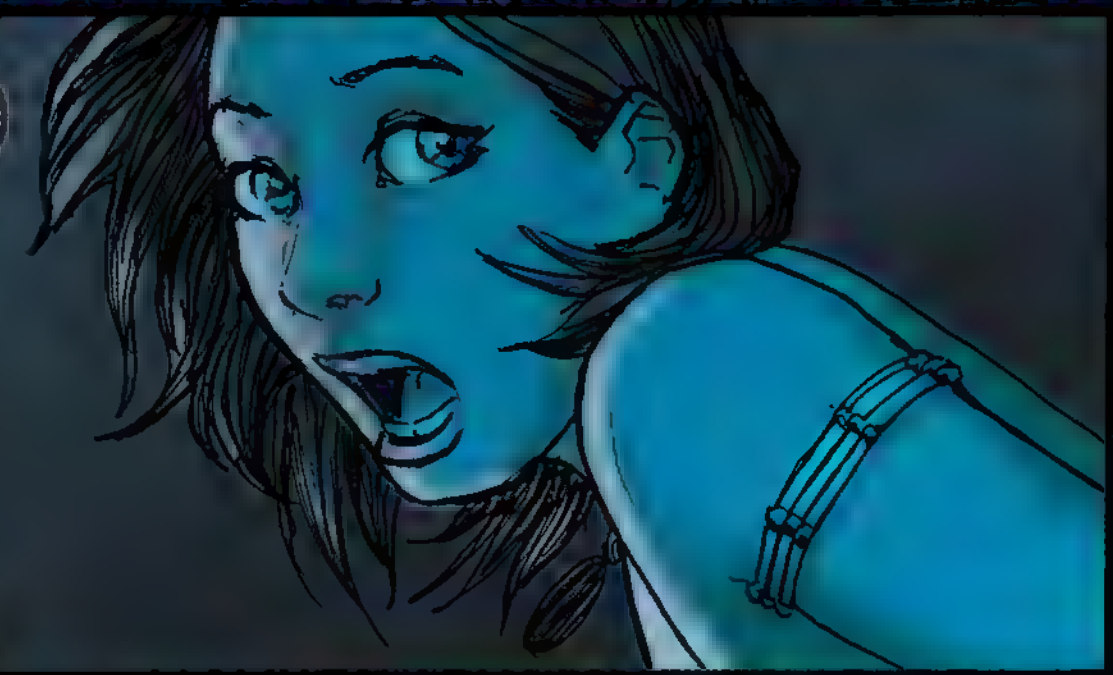
...SHE SLIPPED FROM MY GRASP.



EILAH!



WHAT--?



MOTHER!!!



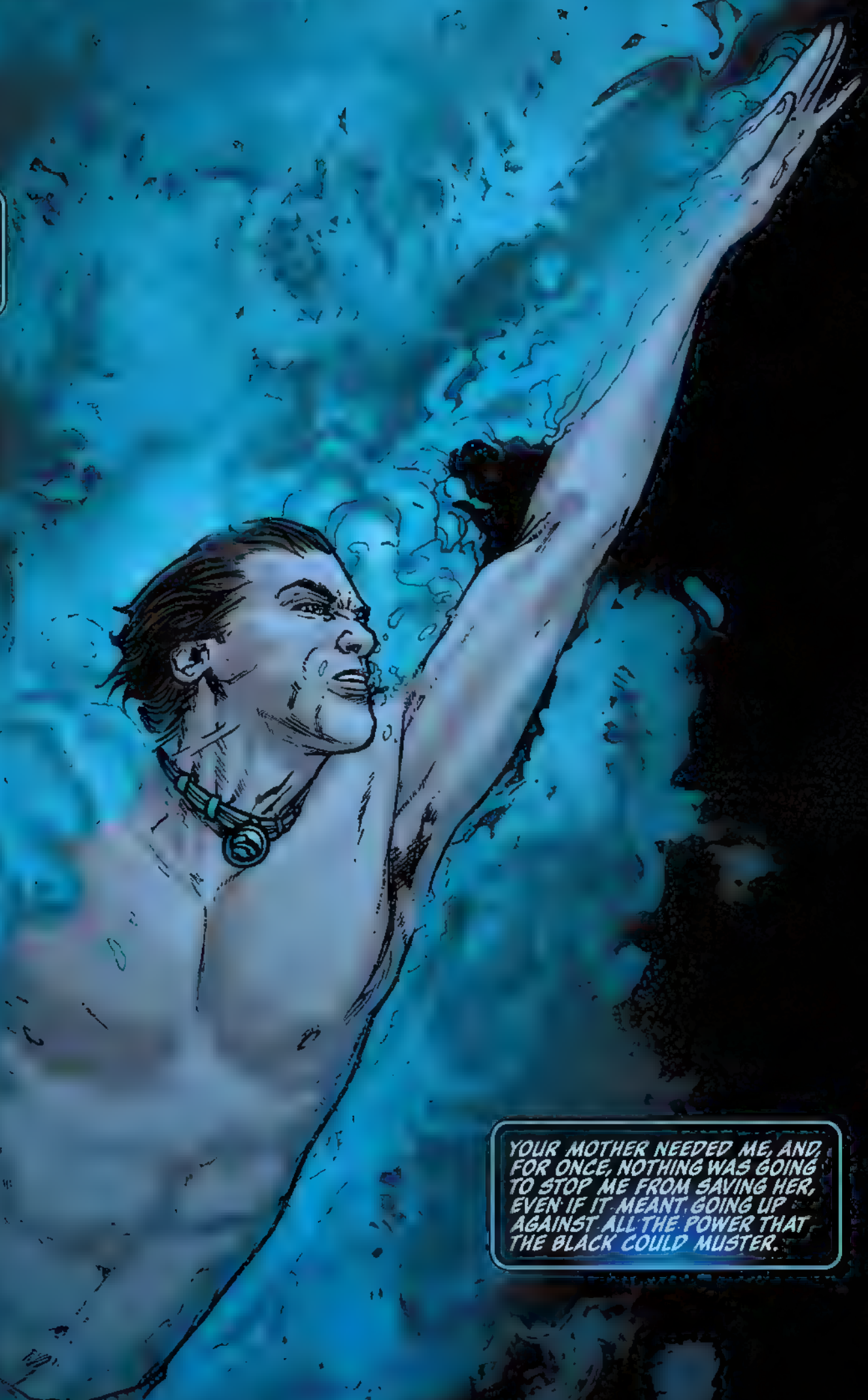
WHAT HAVE I DONE? IF I HAD JUST LISTENED TO HER...

FINN, WATCH OVER YOUR SISTER! KEEP HER SAFE! I'M GOING AFTER MOTHER!

THIS WAS A WAKE-UP CALL, BOTH LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY.

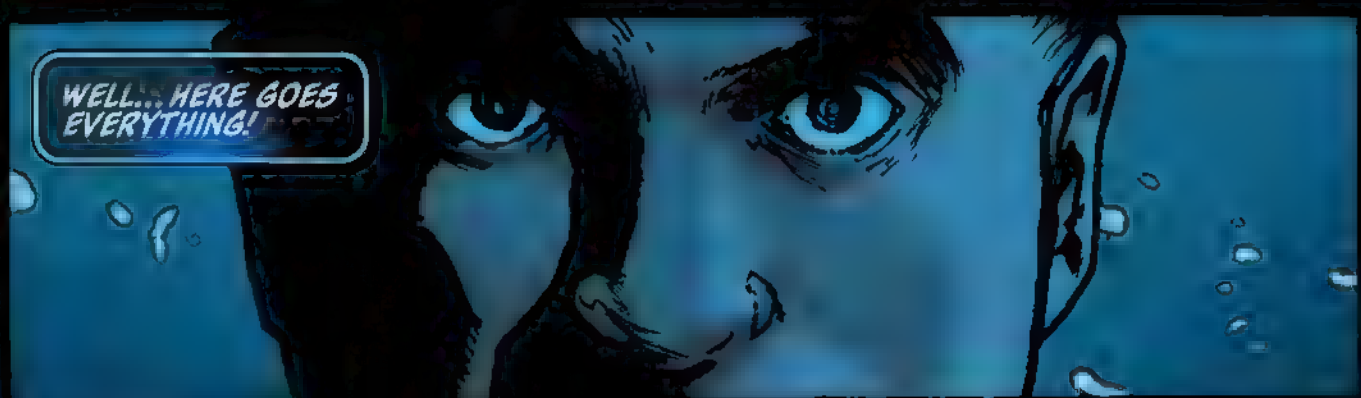
NO MORE BROKEN
PROMISES.

NO MORE DEFERRING TO
THE FUTURE, MAKING
MY FAMILY WAIT FOR A
TOMORROW THAT NEVER
SEEMS TO ARRIVE.



YOUR MOTHER NEEDED ME, AND
FOR ONCE, NOTHING WAS GOING
TO STOP ME FROM SAVING HER,
EVEN IF IT MEANT GOING UP
AGAINST ALL THE POWER THAT
THE BLACK COULD MUSTER.

WELL... HERE GOES
EVERYTHING!



TO BE CONTINUED...



#2
OF 4
COVER A

MICHAEL TURNER'S
**FATHOM
BLUE
DESCENT**





#2
OF 4
COVER B

MICHAEL TURNER'S
FATHOM
BLUE
DESCENT



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MY MIND IS STILL
REELING. I'M
CRAZED AND
OUT OF CONTROL.

YESTERDAY, A GOD, A
MYTHOLOGICAL
DIETY, SHOWED UP
IN OUR HOME. IT
WAS UNBELIEVABLE,
SHATTERING ALL OF
MY PRE-CONCEIVED
NOTIONS ABOUT MY
LIFE AND MY
WORLD, AND IT WAS
HORRIFYINGLY REAL.

IT TOOK
MY WIFE—

—YOUR
MOTHER.

STOLE HER AWAY
FROM OUR BED.

NOW, EVERY MOMENT, I WASTE
MAY BE LIFE OR DEATH FOR HER.

WHAT HAVE I DONE? HOW DID I LET
THIS HAPPEN? WHERE IS SHE? YOUR
MOTHER COULD BE HURT OR DYING,
AND IT'S UP TO ME TO SAVE HER.

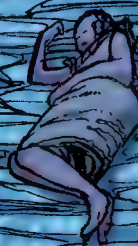


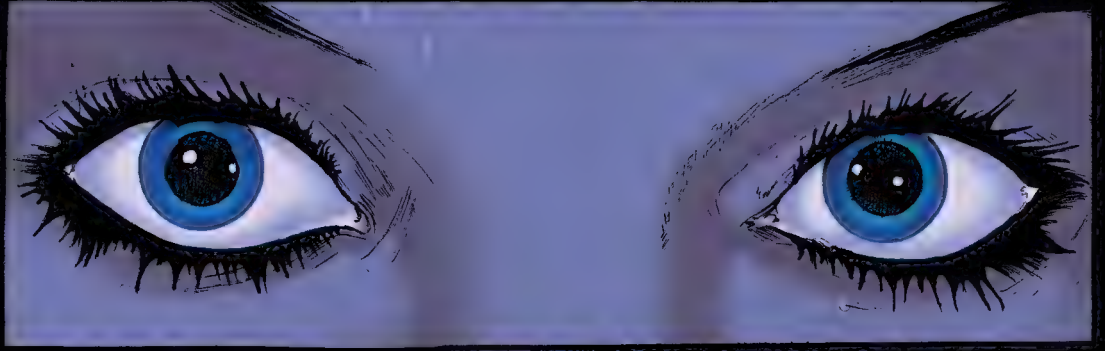
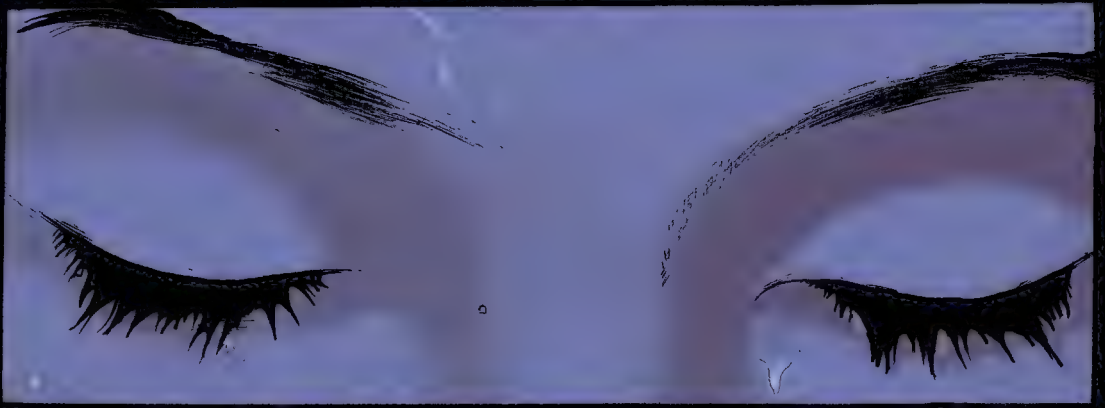
WHEN I WAS A KID, I
WANTED TO BE A HERO.
BUT NOW? I'M A WEAK,
SEDPENTARY, MIDDLE-
AGED COUNCILMAN.
HOW IN THE WORLD AM
I GOING TO DO THIS???

I'M RUNNING ON FEAR AND
ADRENALINE, BUT I DON'T
KNOW IF THAT'S ANYWHERE
NEAR ENOUGH. DON'T KNOW
IF I'LL EVEN SURVIVE LONG
ENOUGH TO REACH EILAH,
MUCH LESS SAVE HER.

I JUST PRAY THAT
SHE'S STILL OKAY.

OF COURSE, I'M NOT QUITE SURE
WHO TO PRAY TO ANYMORE. WHO DO
YOU WORSHIP WHEN YOUR GODS
HAVE BECOME YOUR ENEMIES?





WHERE...?

NO...

...THIS CAN'T
BE--



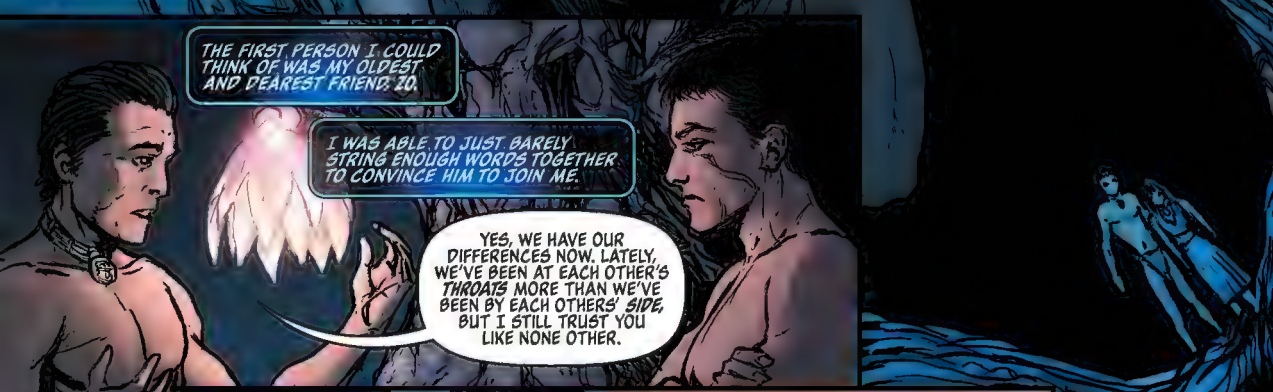
-GASP-



WHEN IT FINALLY HIT ME THAT SHE WAS GONE WHEN THE REALIZATION SET IN, I WAS OUT OF CONTROL. THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS EXPLODING THROUGH ME.

DISASTER. FEAR. DEATH. MUST FIX THIS. MUST FIND HER. MUST SAVE HER. CAN'T TAKE ON THE BLACK ALONE. DESPERATELY NEED HELP.

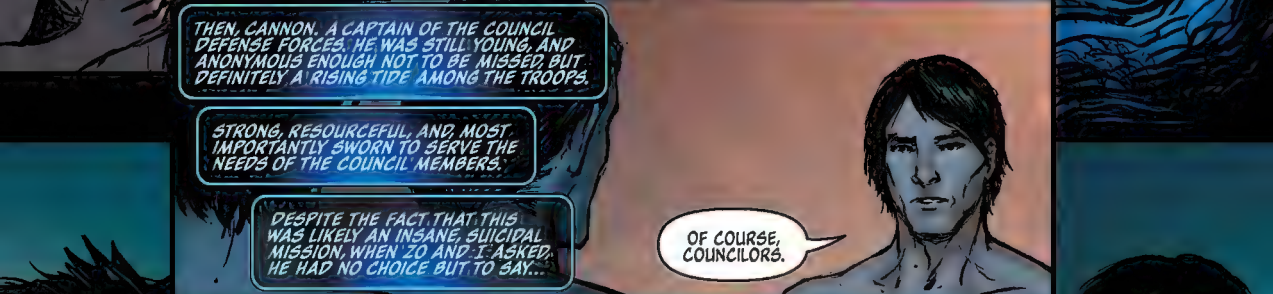
LITTLE DID I KNOW THAT, IN SEEKING OUT THAT HELP I WAS SETTING IN MOTION EVENTS THAT WOULD BE EVEN MORE DEADLY THAN THE BLACK THEMSELVES.



THE FIRST PERSON I COULD THINK OF WAS MY OLDEST AND DEAREST FRIEND: ZO.

I WAS ABLE TO JUST BARELY STRING ENOUGH WORDS TOGETHER TO CONVINCE HIM TO JOIN ME.

YES, WE HAVE OUR DIFFERENCES NOW. LATELY, WE'VE BEEN AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS MORE THAN WE'VE BEEN BY EACH OTHERS' SIDE, BUT I STILL TRUST YOU LIKE NONE OTHER.

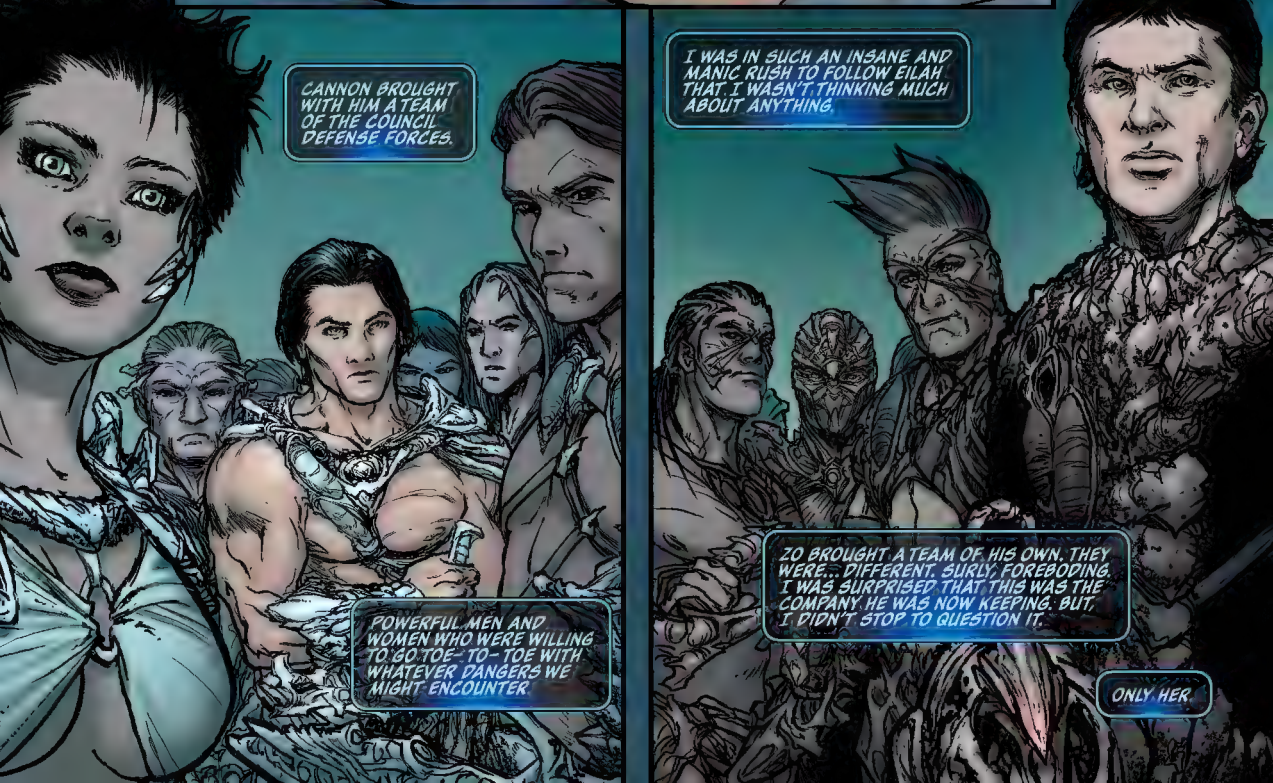


THEN, CANNON, A CAPTAIN OF THE COUNCIL DEFENSE FORCES. HE WAS STILL YOUNG, AND ANONYMOUS ENOUGH NOT TO BE MISSED, BUT DEFINITELY A RISING TIDE AMONG THE TROOPS.

STRONG, RESOURCEFUL, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY SWORN TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS.

DESPITE THE FACT THAT THIS WAS LIKELY AN INSANE, SUICIDAL MISSION, WHEN ZO AND I ASKED, HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SAY...

OF COURSE, COUNCILORS.



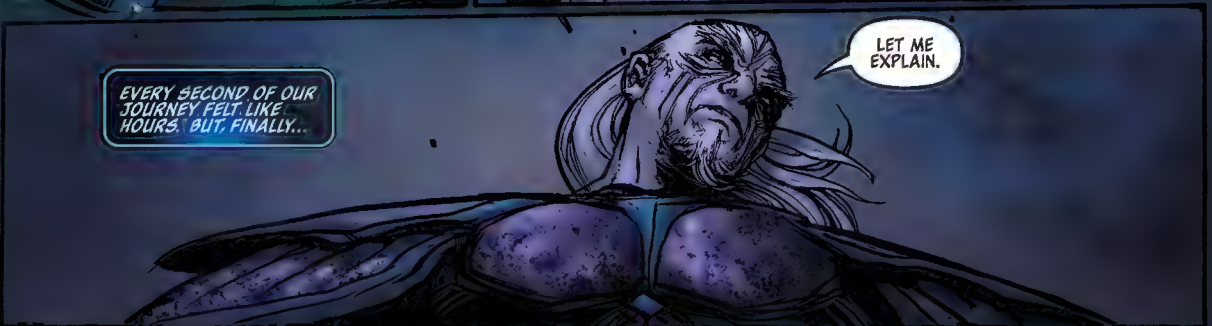
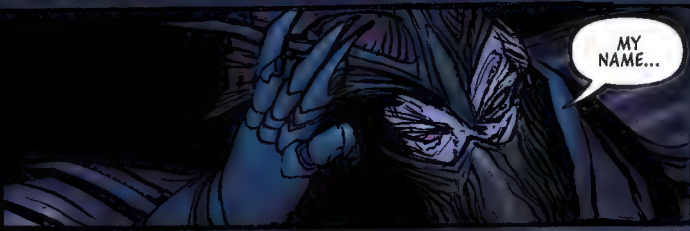
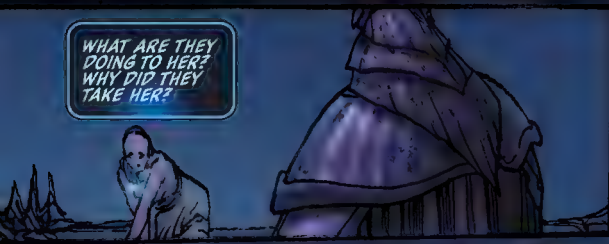
CANNON BROUGHT WITH HIM A TEAM OF THE COUNCIL DEFENSE FORCES.

POWERFUL MEN AND WOMEN WHO WERE WILLING TO GO TOE-TO-TOE WITH WHATEVER DANGERS WE MIGHT ENCOUNTER.

I WAS IN SUCH AN INSANE AND MANIC RUSH TO FOLLOW EILAH THAT I WASN'T THINKING MUCH ABOUT ANYTHING.

ZO BROUGHT A TEAM OF HIS OWN. THEY WERE... DIFFERENT. SURLY, FOREBODING. I WAS SURPRISED THAT THIS WAS THE COMPANY HE WAS NOW KEEPING. BUT, I DIDN'T STOP TO QUESTION IT.

ONLY HER.





...AT LONG LAST, WE
REACHED CHANARNAY.

THE GATEWAY OF
THE ANCIENTS, THE
ENTRANCE TO THE
FORBIDDEN PATH.

IT'S BEEN MILLENNIA SINCE ANY
BLUE HAS SURVIVED THE DESCENT
TO THE REALM OF THE BLACK.

ACCORDING TO
SOME LEGENDS,
THE BLACK USED TO
WELCOME THE BLUE
INTO THEIR CITADEL.
THEY'D ESCORT
THEIR BLUE GUESTS
THROUGH THIS PATH,
EASILY PROTECTING
THEM FROM THE
MENACES WITHIN.

BUT THE BLACK HADN'T BEEN
SEEN IN NUMEROUS LIFETIMES.

ALTHOUGH SOME
FOOLHARDY BLUE
ADVENTURERS
HAD VENTURED
DOWN THE
PATH DURING
THAT TIME.

I'M PETRIFIED.
I KNOW THAT
THIS IS INSANE.
CAN'T LET IT
SHOW. GOTTA
OVERCOME
MY FEAR.

...NONE HAD EVER
RETURNED ALIVE.

ALL THIS TIME I HAD BEEN FEARING
FOR ELIAH, MOVING FULL SPEED
AHEAD TO SAVE HER. BUT, SUDDENLY,
I WAS FEARING FOR MYSELF AS
WELL. WOULD I EVER MAKE IT BACK
FROM THIS? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN
TO YOU, AND FINN IF I DON'T?

DON'T TURN
BACK, JUST
KEEP MOVING
FORWARD.
CONCENTRATE
ON THE OLD
STORIES..

...THOSE ANCIENT BLUE WHO WERE ACTUALLY ESCORTED AND WELCOMED BY THE BLACK RETURNED TO TELL TALES OF THE WONDERS AND CHALLENGES ALONG THIS PATH.

I'VE HEARD YOUR MOTHER TELL THE OLD STORIES HUNDREDS-- PERHAPS THOUSANDS OF TIMES.

I'VE HOPEFULLY LEARNED ENOUGH THAT WE CAN SURVIVE WHERE SO MANY OTHERS HAVE FALLEN. IF WE DO MAKE IT, IT'S ALL THANKS TO HER.

BUT NOTHING COULD EVER HAVE PREPARED ME...

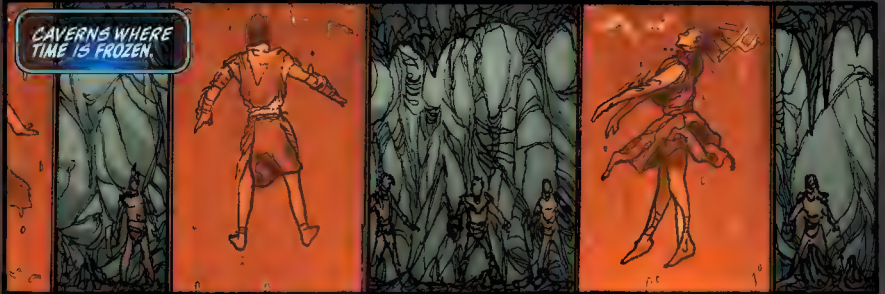
KEEP TO THE PATH, OR THE STALACTITES WILL FALL.



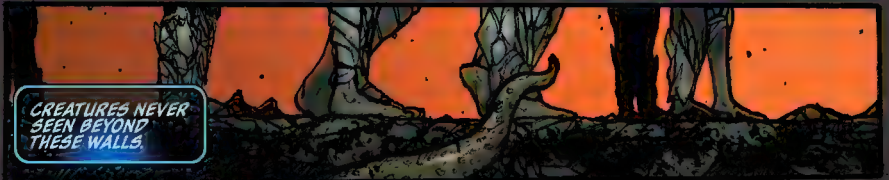
...FOR ACTUALLY SEEING AND EXPERIENCING THE INCREDIBLE THINGS ALONG THE WAY.

WATERFALLS FLOWING UPWARDS.

CAVERNS WHERE TIME IS FROZEN.

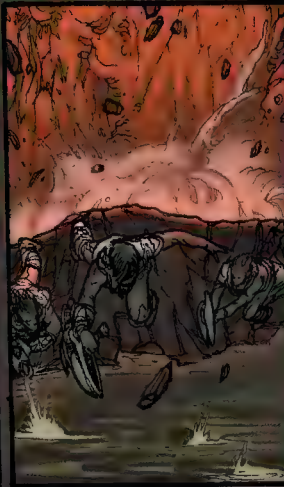


CREATURES NEVER SEEN BEYOND THESE WALLS.



AND... DEADLY TRAPS.

RUN!



WELL, THAT WASN'T SO BAD.



TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE,
THERE WAS A GUT-WRENCHING
TENSION BETWEEN US ALL.

YOUR FRIENDS ARE
AN... INTERESTING GROUP.
I NEVER KNEW THAT YOU
WERE NOW KEEPING THIS
TYPE OF COMPANY.

MY GOALS,
AND THEIRS, ARE
ALIGNED.

WELL, I THANK
YOU FOR COMING,
AND FOR BRINGING
THE HELP. I
TRUST YOU.

MAKE NO
MISTAKE, LOMA. I'M
NOT ON THIS PATH
FOR YOU. NOT EVEN
FOR EILAH. WE'RE MERE
INDIVIDUALS, AND
THERE ARE LARGER,
GLOBAL ISSUES
AT STAKE.

SUCH AS?

I'M HERE BECAUSE THE
ANCIENT TALES TELL US THE BLACK
HAVE, WITHIN THEMSELVES AND THEIR
CITADEL, POWERS AND WEAPONS WE
CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO IMAGINE.

IT MAY ALL
JUST BE MYTH AND
LEGEND, BUT IF THERE'S
EVEN A CHANCE WE'LL FIND
SOMETHING I CAN USE TO
PROTECT OUR PEOPLE, TO
ELIMINATE THE HUMAN
THREAT, TO SAVE OUR
RACE AND REBALANCE
THE PLANET...

...TO FULFILL
MY LIFE'S
MISSION...

...HOW COULD I
NOT DO THIS?

SO, CONTRARY TO
WHAT YOU MAY THINK,
THIS IS NOT ALL ABOUT
YOU. THERE'S MUCH MORE
AT STAKE HERE.

BUT, IF WE
DO SUCCEED IN
RESCUING EILAH,
PROMISE ME
THIS--

--YOU'LL
HELP HER RETURN
TO THE HAPPY,
MISCHIEVOUS, FUNNY
GIRL SHE ONCE WAS.
BEFORE SHE BECAME
THE POLAR, SAD WIFE
AND MOTHER SHE'S
GROWN INTO.

BECAUSE
SHE WAS AN
INCREDIBLE SPIRIT,
AND ALTHOUGH I CAN
POSSIBLY FORGIVE
YOUR MISGUIDED
POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES,
YOUR NEGLECT OF
EILAH IS SOMETHING
I CAN NEVER
FORGIVE.

NOR CAN
I. YOU HAVE
MY--

SHLUKK

ZO?





RELAX,
EILAH.



YOU'RE AMONG
FRIENDS.



AMONG THE
BLACK.



THE FOREFATHERS
OF THE BLUE, THE
PROGENITORS OF ALL
THAT IS GOOD, AND
HOLY, AND NOBLE IN
YOUR RACE.

THE STORIES YOU'VE
BEEN TELLING ALL YOUR
LIFE? THEY ALL BEGIN, AND
END, RIGHT HERE. WELCOME
TO THE WORLD YOU'VE
BEEN DESCRIBING.



COME. ALLOW
ME TO SHOW
YOU YOUR NEW
HOME.



DO I HAVE A
CHOICE?



NO.



BUT I'M HOPEFUL THAT
YOU'LL COME TO BE HAPPY
HERE NONETHELESS.
IN TIME.



ALL THOSE
HORRIFYING
NIGHTMARES.
ALL THOSE...



--VISITS.

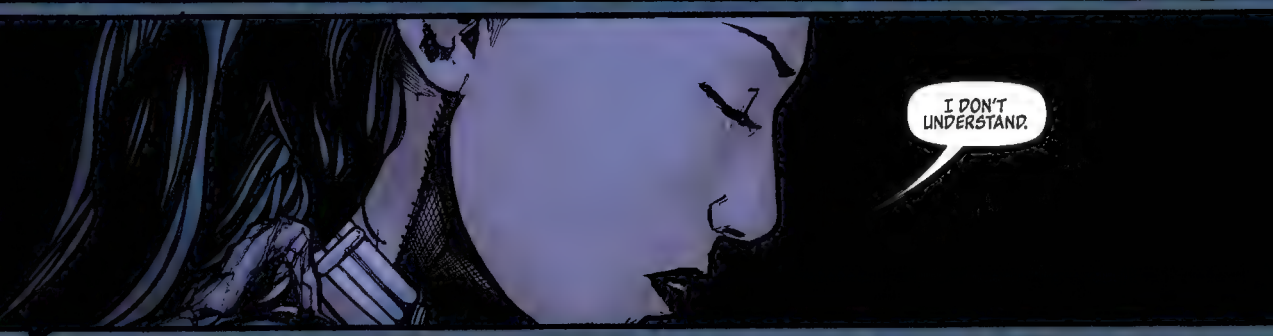


YOU
VIOLATED
ME!



I HONORED
YOU.





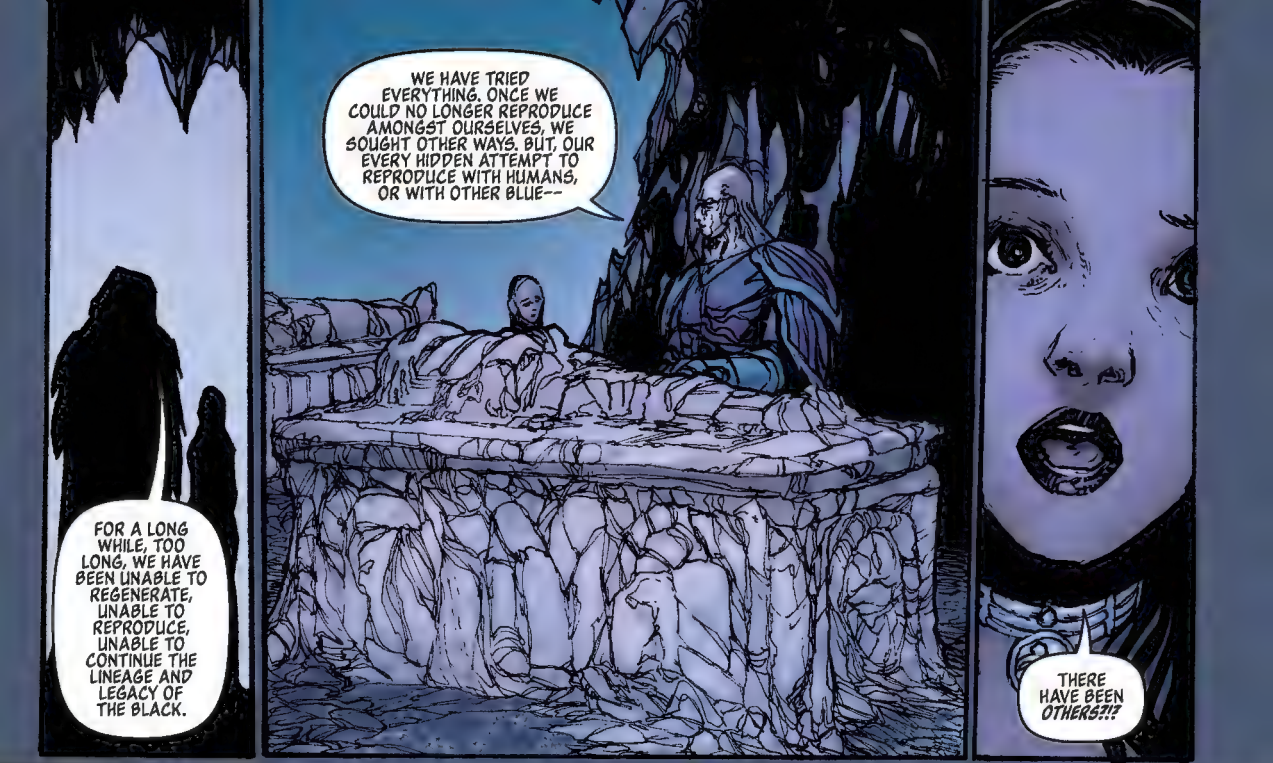
I DON'T
UNDERSTAND.



THE BLACK ARE DYING.
AS THE PLANET WITHERS
BENEATH THE HUMAN ABUSE,
OUR POWER IS SAPPED. THE
WORLD IS ON THE EDGE OF
ANNIHILATION AND, THUS, SO
ARE WE. WE ARE LOCKED HERE
IN THE DARK, SLOWLY
WITHERING AWAY.

MY FELLOW BLACK
AND I MUST SPEND
EVER-LONGER PERIODS OF
TIME IN SILENT REST--
MEDITATION-- SAVING OUR
STRENGTH, ATTEMPTING TO
HOLD ON TO OUR POWER,
OUR LIVES, FOR AS
LONG AS WE CAN.

WE HAVEN'T
MUCH TIME
LEFT.



WE HAVE TRIED
EVERYTHING. ONCE WE
COULD NO LONGER REPRODUCE
AMONGST OURSELVES, WE
SOUGHT OTHER WAYS. BUT, OUR
EVERY HIDDEN ATTEMPT TO
REPRODUCE WITH HUMANS,
OR WITH OTHER BLUE--

FOR A LONG
WHILE, TOO
LONG, WE HAVE
BEEN UNABLE TO
REGENERATE,
UNABLE TO
REPRODUCE,
UNABLE TO
CONTINUE THE
LINEAGE AND
LEGACY OF
THE BLACK.

THERE
HAVE BEEN
OTHERS???

HUNDREDS.
PERHAPS
THOUSANDS.
THE NUMBER IS
MEANINGLESS. THE
END RESULT IS THAT
ALL ATTEMPTS TO
REPRODUCE, TO
PRODUCE HYBRID
CHILDREN WITH A
BLUE OR WITH
HUMANS, HAVE
FAILED.

SOME IN
HORRIFIC
FASHION.

UNTIL NOW.
UNTIL ASPEN.

UNTIL YOU.

YOU MEAN...?



YES, THAT'S
EXACTLY WHAT
I MEAN.



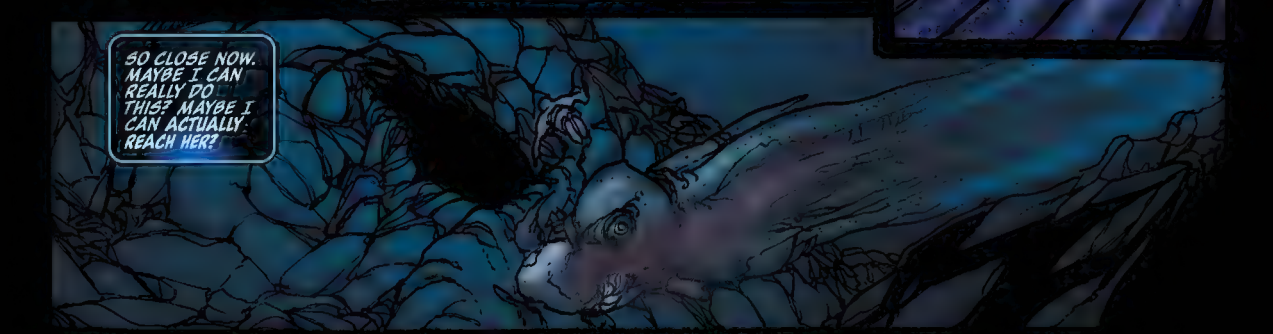
I AM
ASPEN'S TRUE
FATHER.



WE WERE
ALMOST
THERE.



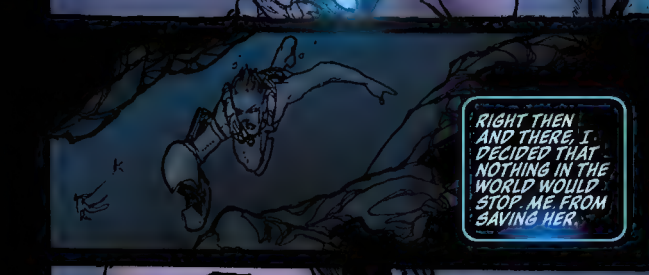
EILAH, YOU
ARE THE LAST
CHANCE.



SO CLOSE NOW.
MAYBE I CAN
REALLY DO
THIS? MAYBE I
CAN ACTUALLY
REACH HER?



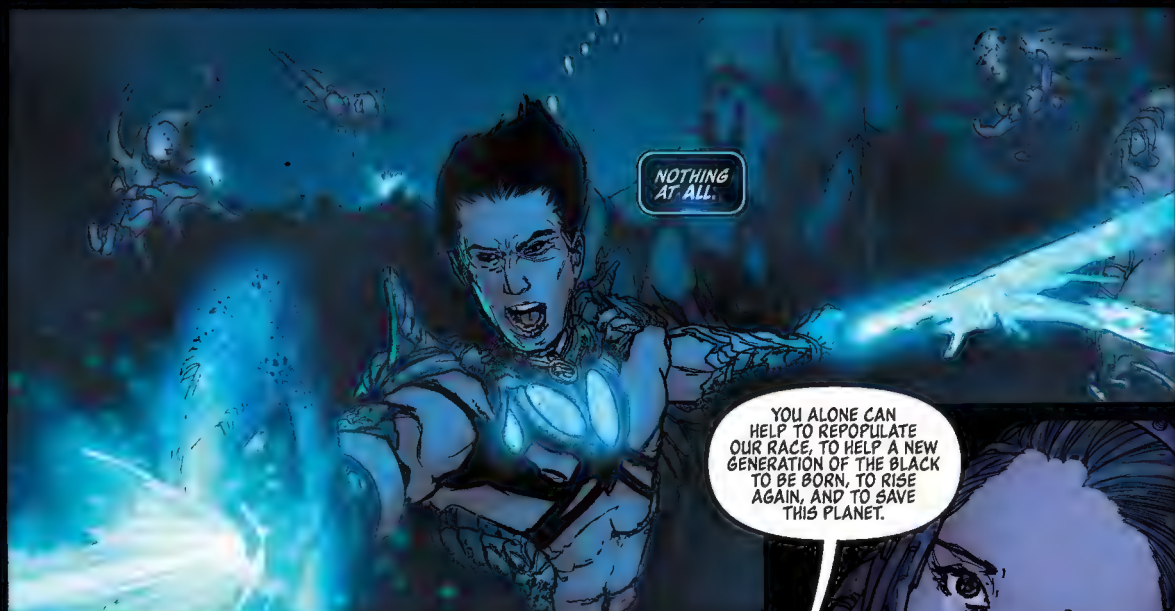
THE BLACK
ARE DYING, BUT
YOU MAY BE OUR
SALVATION.



RIGHT THEN
AND THERE, I
DECIDED THAT
NOTHING IN THE
WORLD WOULD
STOP ME FROM
SAVING HER.

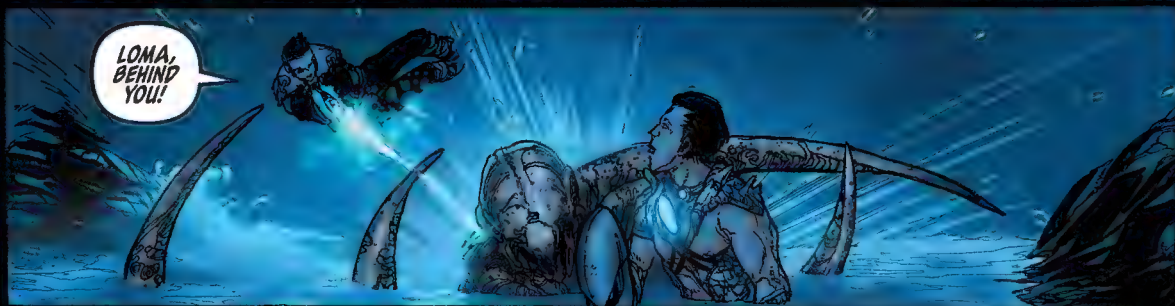
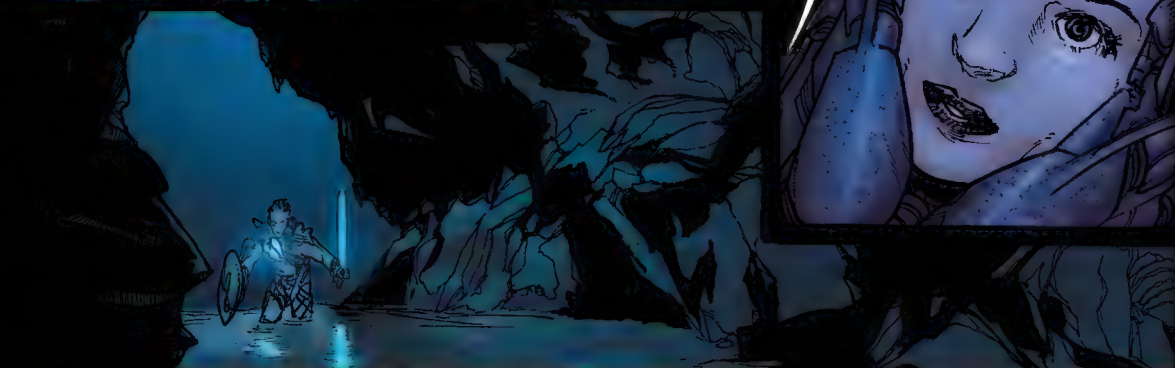


YOU ARE THE
ONE WHO CAN
SAVE OUR
RACE.



NOTHING
AT ALL.

YOU ALONE CAN
HELP TO REPOPULATE
OUR RACE, TO HELP A NEW
GENERATION OF THE BLACK
TO BE BORN, TO RISE
AGAIN, AND TO SAVE
THIS PLANET.



LOMA,
BEHIND
YOU!



THANK
YOU, ZO.

JUST
RETURNING
THE FAVOR.



MY FRIENDS, THIS IS IT. I UNDERSTAND THE GRAVITY OF WHAT WE'RE SEEING. I KNOW THAT THIS IS AWE-INSPIRING. I'M JUST AS FRIGHTENED AS YOU ARE.

BUT, IT'S TIME TO PUT AWE ASIDE. WE HAVE A MISSION, A GOAL, AND WE CANNOT LET FEAR OR REVERENCE OR WONDERMENT STOP US.

YES, THIS IS THE BLACK. YES, WE'VE BEEN TAUGHT TO WORSHIP AND REVERE THEM. BUT THEY'VE ATTACKED ONE OF US, AND NOW WE MUST DEFEND OUR PEOPLE AGAINST OUR OWN GODS.

MY FELLOW BLUE, NO MATTER WHAT WE MAY SEE IN THERE, NO MATTER WHAT THE BLACK MAY SAY OR DO, WE CANNOT RELENT. WE CANNOT YIELD. WE CANNOT EVER AGAIN LET THEM TREAT US THIS WAY.



WELL SAID, COUNCILOR ABESALOMA.

RECHARGE YOUR WEAPONS, EVERYONE. SOUNDS LIKE WE'RE GOING IN.

BE CONTINUED...



#3
OF 4
COVER A

MICHAEL TURNER'S
**FATHOM
BLUE
DESCENT**





#3

OF 4
COVER B

MICHAEL TURNER'S
**FATHOM
BLUE
DESCENT**



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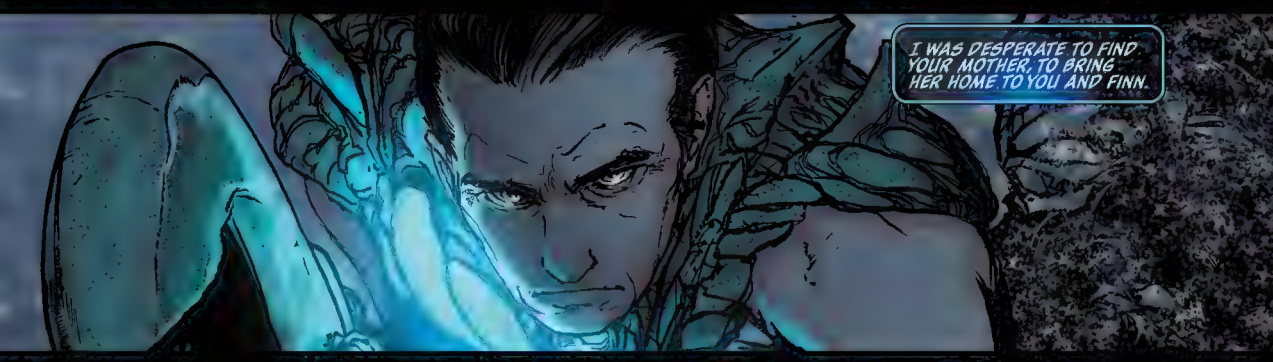


ASPEN, I CAN'T EVEN
BEGIN TO PORTRAY THE
IMMENSITY OF THIS
PLACE, THIS MOMENT.

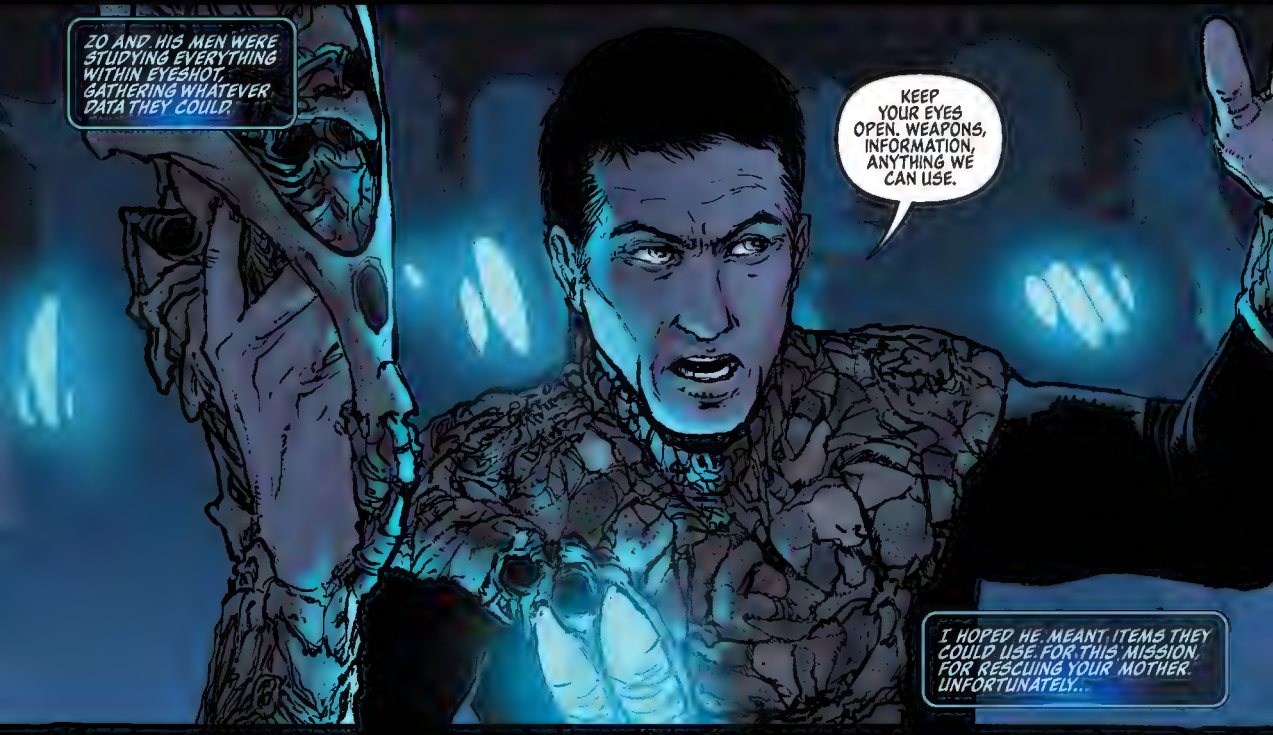
NONE OF US COULD
BELIEVE THAT WE
WERE ACTUALLY
WALKING THROUGH
THE ANCIENT,
LEGENDARY CITADEL
OF THE BLACK.



CANNON AND HIS TEAM LED
THE WAY, ON GUARD FOR
WHATEVER UNKNOWN TRAPS
OR ATTACKS WE MIGHT FACE.



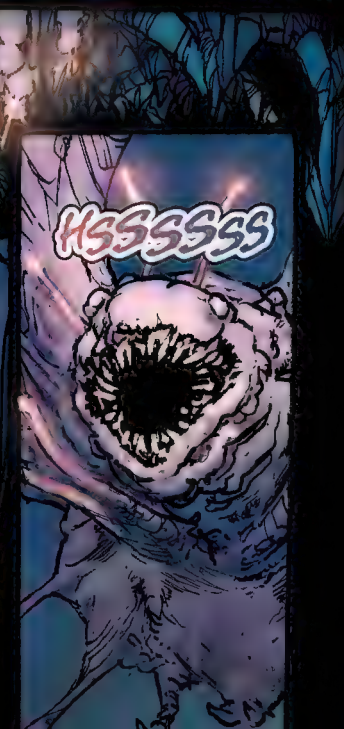
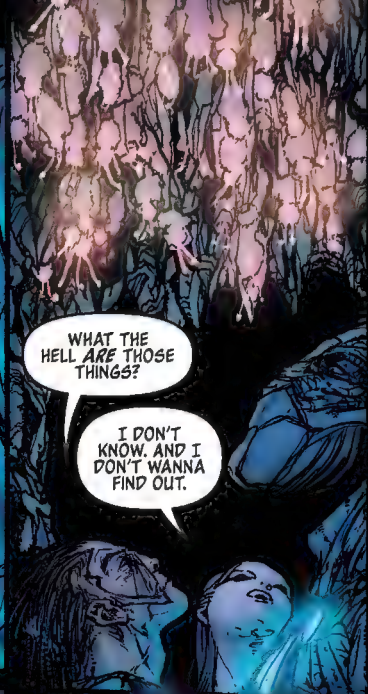
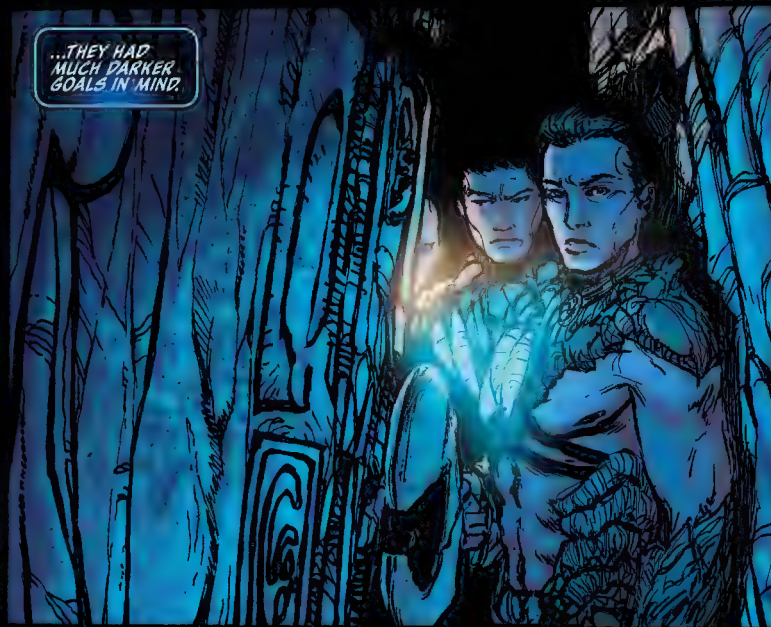
I WAS DESPERATE TO FIND
YOUR MOTHER, TO BRING
HER HOME TO YOU AND FINN.



ZO AND HIS MEN WERE
STUDYING EVERYTHING
WITHIN EYESHOT,
GATHERING WHATEVER
DATA THEY COULD.

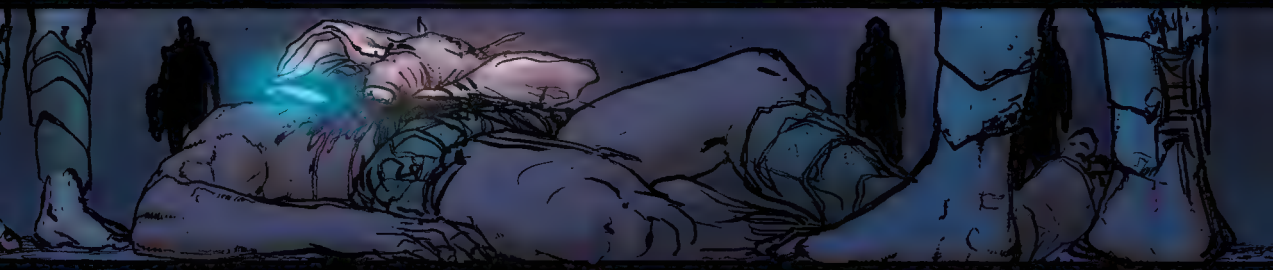
KEEP
YOUR EYES
OPEN, WEAPONS,
INFORMATION,
ANYTHING WE
CAN USE.

I HOPED HE MEANT ITEMS THEY
COULD USE FOR THIS MISSION.
FOR RESCUING YOUR MOTHER.
UNFORTUNATELY...

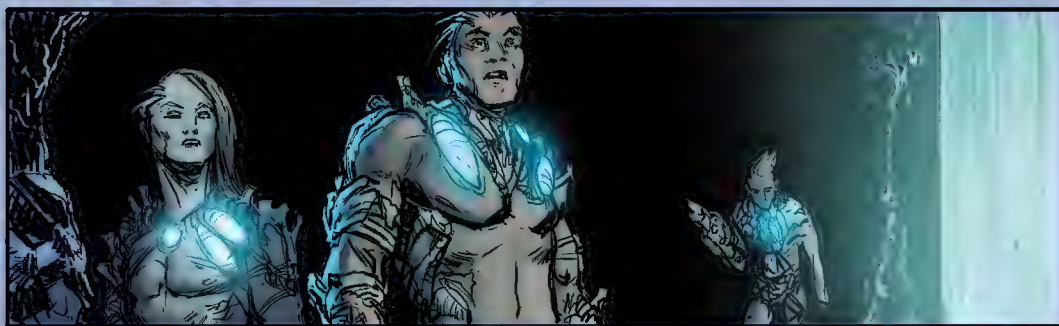
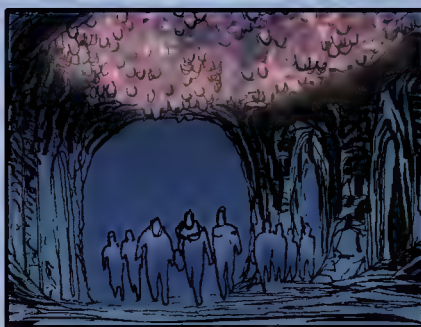




YAARRGGH!



...NO ONE
ELSE JABS AT
THE CEILING
CREATURES.





THE BLACK!



EVERYONE
KEEP BACK!



ARE THEY
ALIVE?

THEY'RE NOT
MOVING.

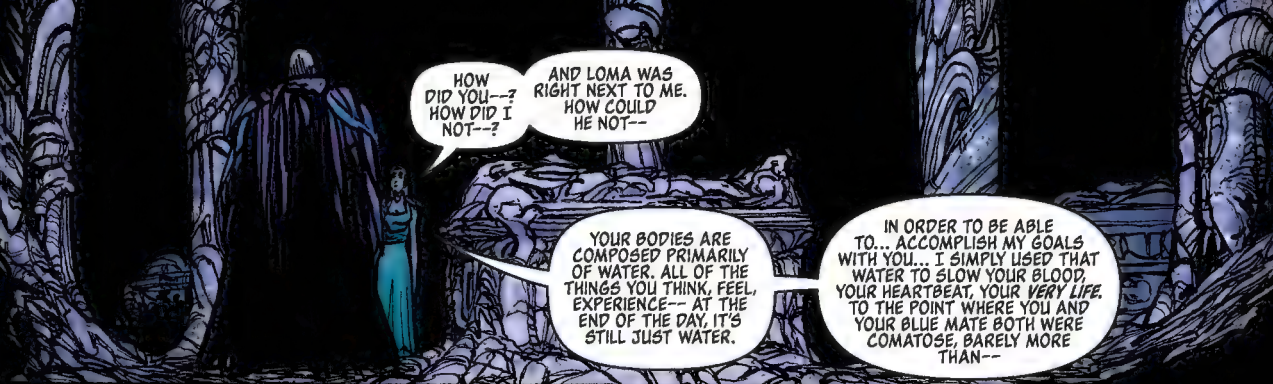


GOOD, THIS WILL
BE EASY. WE CAN FAN
OUT, TAKE OUR TIME
LOOKING FOR WEAPONS
OR INFORMATION,
AND--



WAIT...

...I HEAR
HER.



HOW
DID YOU---?
HOW DID I
NOT---?

AND LOMA WAS
RIGHT NEXT TO ME.
HOW COULD
HE NOT--

YOUR BODIES ARE
COMPOSED PRIMARILY
OF WATER. ALL OF THE
THINGS YOU THINK, FEEL,
EXPERIENCE-- AT THE
END OF THE DAY, IT'S
STILL JUST WATER.

IN ORDER TO BE ABLE
TO... ACCOMPLISH MY GOALS
WITH YOU... I SLOW YOUR BLOOD,
YOUR HEARTBEAT, YOUR *VERY LIFE*.
TO THE POINT WHERE YOU AND
YOUR BLUE MATE BOTH WERE
COMATOSE, BARELY MORE
THAN--



--THAT'S SICK.
DEPLOYABLE--



--DESPERATE.

IT'S THE ACT OF A
BEING DESPERATE TO SAVE
HIS RACE, HIS PLANET. YOU
WOULD'VE DONE AT LEAST AS
MUCH HAD IT BEEN ASPEN OR
FINN'S LIVES, OR THE LIVES
OF ALL THE BLUE,
AT STAKE.



EILAH, HAVE YOU EVER
HAD TO WATCH YOUR LOVED
ONES DYING AT YOUR FEET?
TO HOLD YOUR MATE AS THEY
EXPIRED IN YOUR ARMS? TO SEE
YOUR *OWN CHILDREN* WASTE AWAY
BEFORE YOU, SIMPLY BECAUSE
THE HUMANS ARE CALLOUSLY
KILLING OUR PLANET AND
ALTERING OUR WATERS?



I'VE EXPERIENCED
ALL OF THAT. MY FELLOW
BLACK HAVE EXPERIENCED
IT. YOU SEE THE EVIDENCE
BEFORE YOU HERE.

MY TASK IS TO
FIND A FUTURE FOR OUR
PEOPLE, TO REPOPULATE
A DYING RACE.



THAT'S
NOT FAIR.

YOU'RE NOT
ALLOWED TO
MAKE ME FEEL
SORRY FOR
YOU.

NOT AFTER
WHAT YOU'VE
DONE TO US.



YOU AND YOUR MATE ARE BUT TWO SMALL BEINGS.

WE ARE AN ENTIRE SOCIETY.

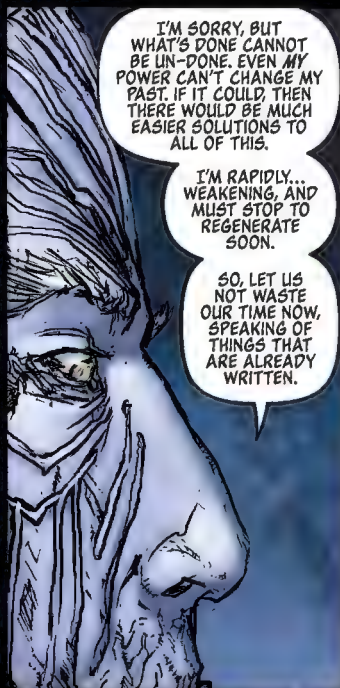
SOMETIMES, THE ENDS DO JUSTIFY THE MEANS.



DO THEY? THE BLUE REVERE YOU AND ALL THAT YOU STAND--

--ALL THAT WE *THOUGHT* YOU STAND FOR. HAD YOU SIMPLY *ASKED*...

...DO YOU NOT THINK THAT WE WOULD HAVE--



I'M SORRY, BUT WHAT'S DONE CANNOT BE UN-DONE. EVEN MY POWER CAN'T CHANGE MY PAST. IF IT COULD, THEN THERE WOULD BE MUCH EASIER SOLUTIONS TO ALL OF THIS.

I'M RAPIDLY... WEAKENING, AND MUST STOP TO REGENERATE SOON.

SO, LET US NOT WASTE OUR TIME NOW, SPEAKING OF THINGS THAT ARE ALREADY WRITTEN.



THERE WILL BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TIME FOR THAT LATER.

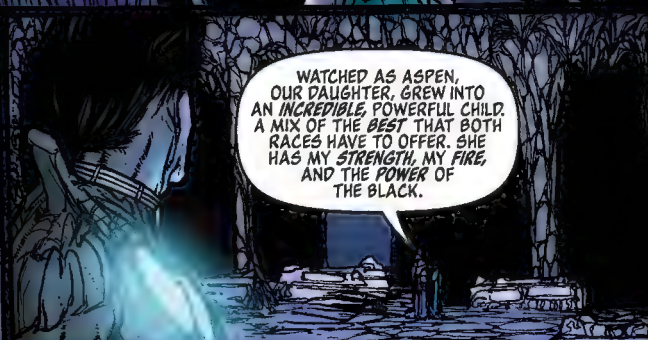
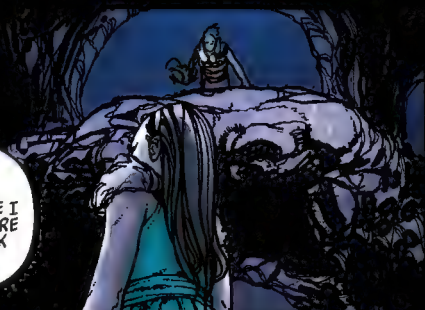
WE'RE HERE, NOW, TO FIND A FUTURE. TO DEFINE A NEW WORLD. AND I... WE... CAN OFFER YOU A LIFE YOU NEVER IMAGINED, A LIFE BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS...



EILAH!



I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR QUITE A LONG TIME, EILAH. EVER SINCE I REALIZED THAT YOU WERE *THE ONE*. I KEPT TRACK OF YOU, WATCHED OVER YOU.



WATCHED AS ASPEN, OUR DAUGHTER, GREW INTO AN *INCREDIBLE*, POWERFUL CHILD. A MIX OF THE *BEST* THAT BOTH RACES HAVE TO OFFER. SHE HAS MY *STRENGTH*, MY *FIRE*, AND THE *POWER* OF THE BLACK.



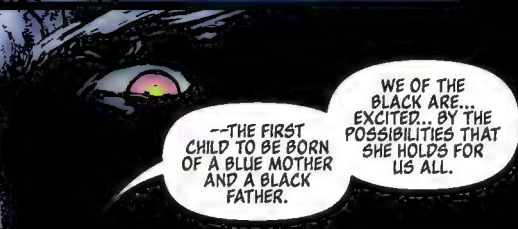
THE POWER OF HER TRUE FATHER.

WHAT?!!



BUT, THANKS TO YOU AND HER ADOPTIVE FATHER, SHE ALSO HAS THE KINDNESS AND SERENITY OF THE BLUE.

ASPEN'S THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA--



WE OF THE BLACK ARE... EXCITED... BY THE POSSIBILITIES THAT SHE HOLDS FOR US ALL.

--THE FIRST CHILD TO BE BORN OF A BLUE MOTHER AND A BLACK FATHER.



BUT, I'VE
ALSO WATCHED
AS YOU'VE SLOWLY
LOST YOURSELF IN
YOUR LIFE.

YOU'VE GONE
FROM A **STRONG,**
INDEPENDENT WOMAN,
A WOMAN OF GREAT **JOY**
AND **CREATIVITY** TO A
MERE SHELL OF YOUR
FORMER SELF.



I'VE WATCHED AS
HE LEAVES YOU ALONE,
NEGLECTS YOU, IGNORES YOU.
SO CAUGHT UP IN HIMSELF
AND HIS WORK THAT HE NO
LONGER EVEN SEES YOU FOR
THE **TRIUMPHANT, MAJESTIC**
SOUL YOU ARE.



HOW OFTEN DO
YOU FEEL **JOY** ANYMORE,
EILAH? HOW OFTEN DO YOU
STILL STAND ON THAT STAGE
AND TELL YOUR STORIES? HOW
OFTEN DO YOU SING, AND DANCE,
AND SMILE, AND NOT LET THE
BURDEN OF YOUR HUSBAND AND
THE HOUSE AND MUNDANE
CHORES WEIGH YOU
DOWN?

HERE, YOU HAVE
AN ENTIRE PEOPLE
WHO NEED YOU. HERE,
YOU ARE A **SAVIOR,** A
GODDESS-TO-BE.

THROUGH YOU,
THROUGH ASPEN,
THROUGH THE GENERATIONS
YOU WILL HELP TO FOSTER,
WE CAN BEGIN TO REPRODUCE
AGAIN. BEGIN TO REPOPULATE
OUR RACE. TURN THIS PLACE
AGAIN INTO THE **PARADISE**
IT ONCE WAS.

WITH YOU, EILAH,
WE CAN FIND THE
STRENGTH AND RESOURCES
TO OVERCOME OUR
LETHARGY AND RISE UP TO
DESTROY THE HUMAN
THREAT ONCE AND FOR
ALL, RETURNING BALANCE
TO THE WORLD.



ASPEN IS ONLY THE
FIRST, BUT HOPEFULLY
THE FIRST OF **MANY** NEW
HYBRIDS THAT CAN JOIN
THE BLACK AND THE BLUE IN
A NEW, HUMAN-FREE,
UTOPIAN EARTH. THE WAY
THE EARTH ONCE WAS,
AND CAN BE AGAIN.

THAT GOES AGAINST
EVERYTHING THAT LOMA'S SPENT
HIS LIFE FIGHTING FOR.

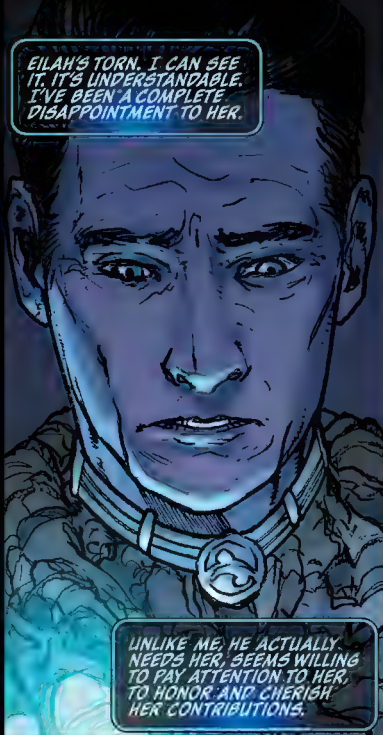


YOUR
HUSBAND
NEVER
RESPECTED
YOU. HERE,
YOU WILL BE
REVERED.

FOR WHO
I AM? OR
SIMPLY FOR
WHAT I CAN
GIVE YOU?

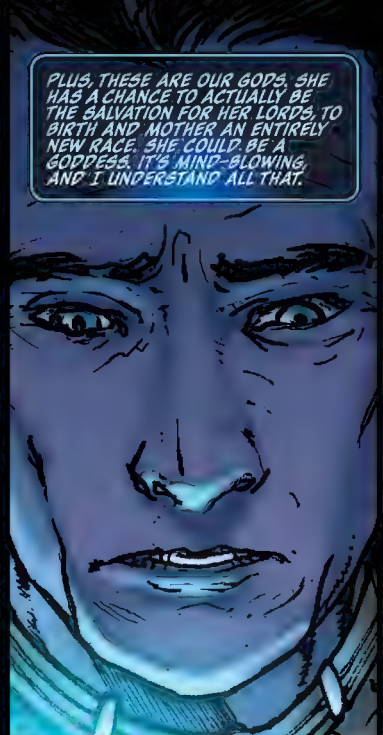


DOES IT
MATTER?



EILAH'S TORN. I CAN SEE IT. IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE. I'VE BEEN A COMPLETE DISAPPOINTMENT TO HER.

UNLIKE ME, HE ACTUALLY NEEDS HER, SEEMS WILLING TO PAY ATTENTION TO HER, TO HONOR AND CHERISH HER CONTRIBUTIONS.



PLUS, THESE ARE OUR GODS. SHE HAS A CHANCE TO ACTUALLY BE THE SALVATION FOR HER LORDS, TO BIRTH AND MOTHER AN ENTIRELY NEW RACE. SHE COULD BE A GODDESS. IT'S MIND-BLOWING, AND I UNDERSTAND ALL THAT.



ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS ALLEGED HOLY MAN HAS DEFILED HER, ABUSED HER, KIDNAPPED HER, AND HE'S SEEKING TO DESTROY BILLIONS OF PEOPLE.

IF LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES, THEY'D COMMIT GENOCIDE ON A GLOBAL SCALE.



HOW CAN SHE POSSIBLY GIVE IN TO THAT? HOW COULD THAT POSSIBLY EVER BE OK?

I ASSUME...



...YOU WON'T LET ME LEAVE HERE OF MY OWN FREE WILL.



I ALSO ASSUME THAT I'LL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO CONSIDER YOUR PROPOSAL.

PERHAPS BE FORCED TO OBEY YOUR WISHES, WHETHER I WANT TO... OR NOT.

THAT YOU'LL CONTINUE TO FORCE YOURSELF UPON ME, EVEN IF I REFUSE YOU.



I HOPE THAT IT WILL NOT COME TO THAT. I HOPE THAT YOU WILL CHOOSE THIS PATH HAPPILY, UNDERSTANDING ALL THAT IT HAS TO OFFER.



THIS IS THE SYMBOL OF LOMA'S FAMILY. THESE AMULETS CONTAIN A RECORDED HISTORY OF GENERATIONS OF HIS ANCESTORS. THEIR THOUGHTS, THEIR DREAMS, THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, THEIR VERY SOULS ARE EMBEDDED HERE FOR US TO EXPLORE, TO REMEMBER, TO BE GUIDED BY.



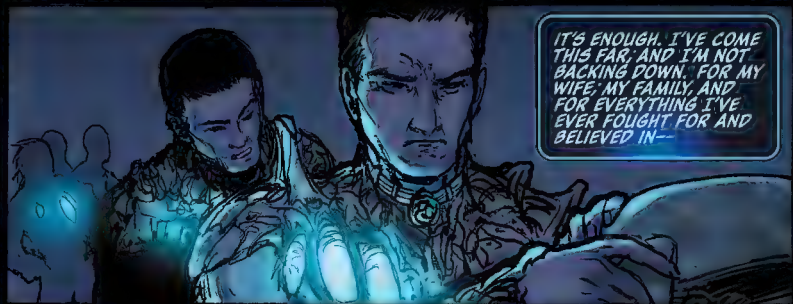
IF I'M TO EVEN CONSIDER YOUR PROPOSAL, TO EVEN THINK OF IT AT ALL, THEN I'M NO LONGER WORTHY OF WEARING THIS.



NO...!



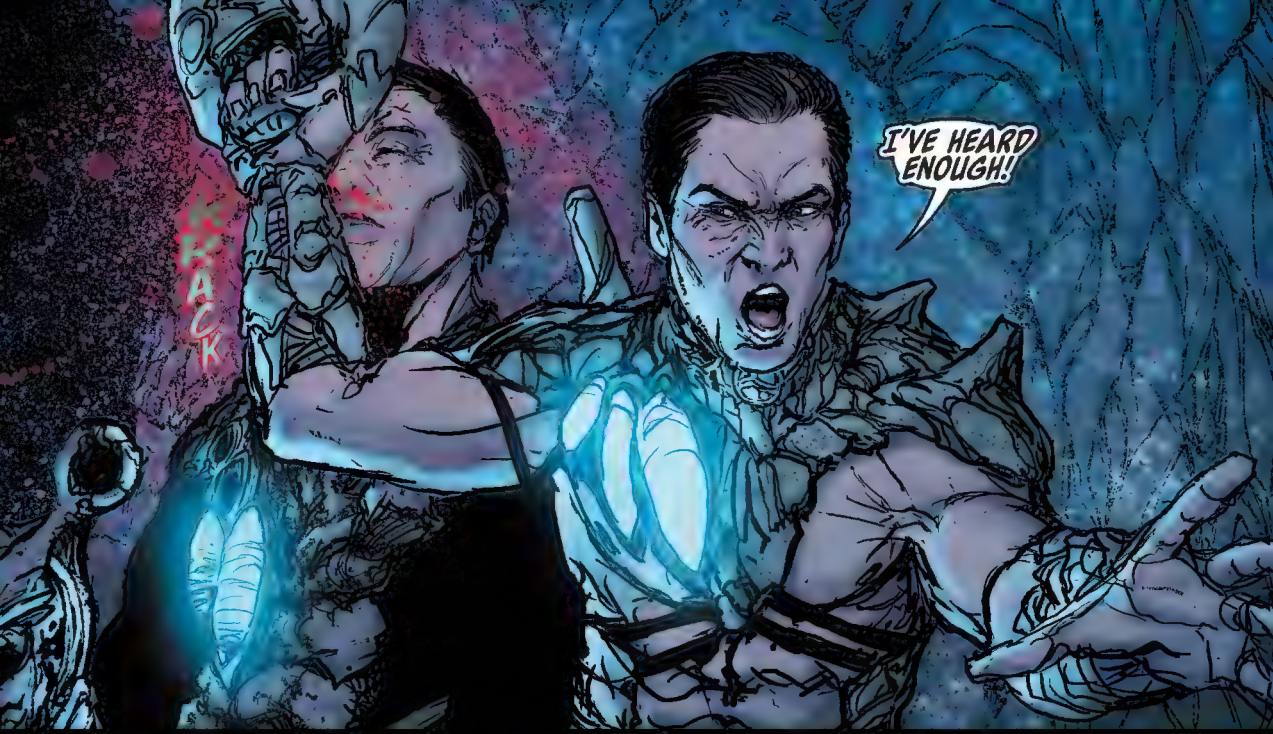
COME. LET US LEAVE THIS CHAMBER OF DEATH, AND LET ME SHOW YOU WHERE YOU CAN BEGIN YOUR NEW LIFE.



IT'S ENOUGH. I'VE COME THIS FAR, AND I'M NOT BACKING DOWN. FOR MY WIFE, MY FAMILY, AND FOR EVERYTHING I'VE EVER FOUGHT FOR AND BELIEVED IN—



LOMA, YOU NEED TO ACCEPT THIS. IT'S THE RIGHT ANSWER. THIS IS THE SOLUTION TO EVERYTHING. IT'S BIGGER THAN YOU AND—



I'VE HEARD
ENOUGH!



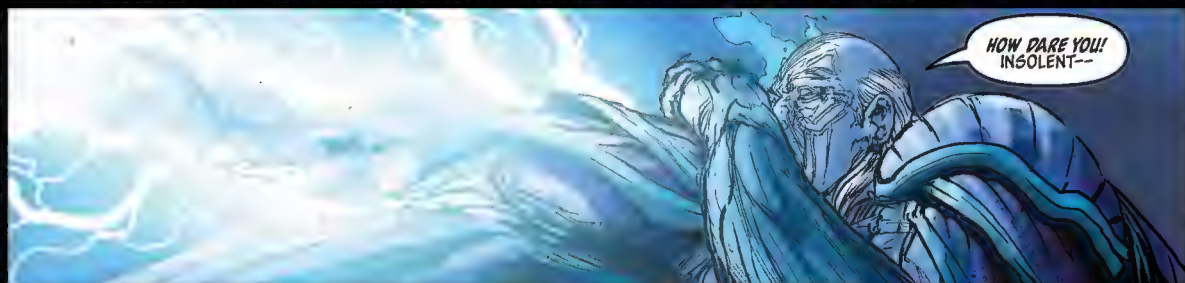
GIVE ME
MY FAMILY--

LOMA...
NO...

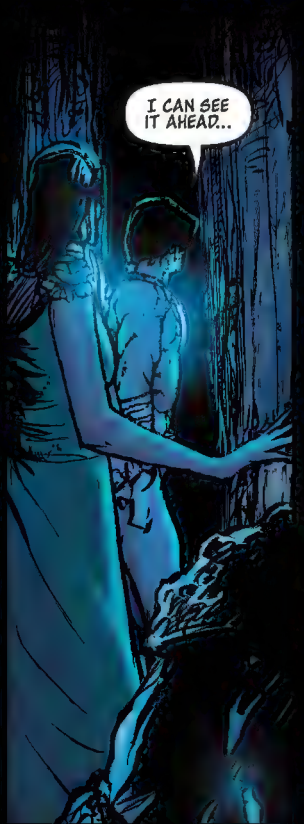
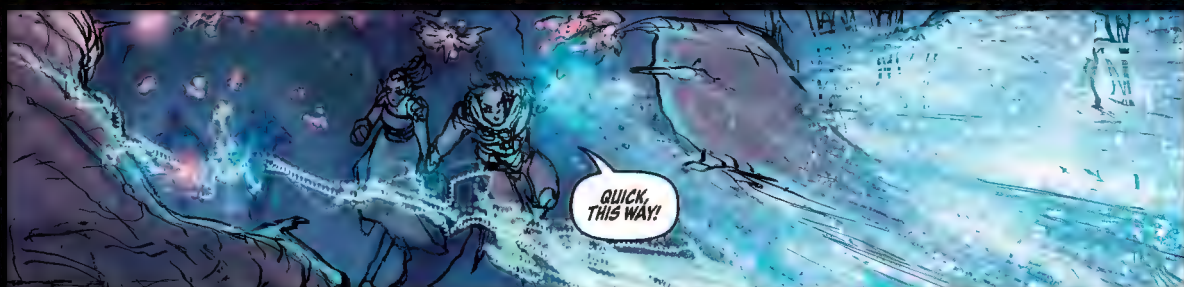
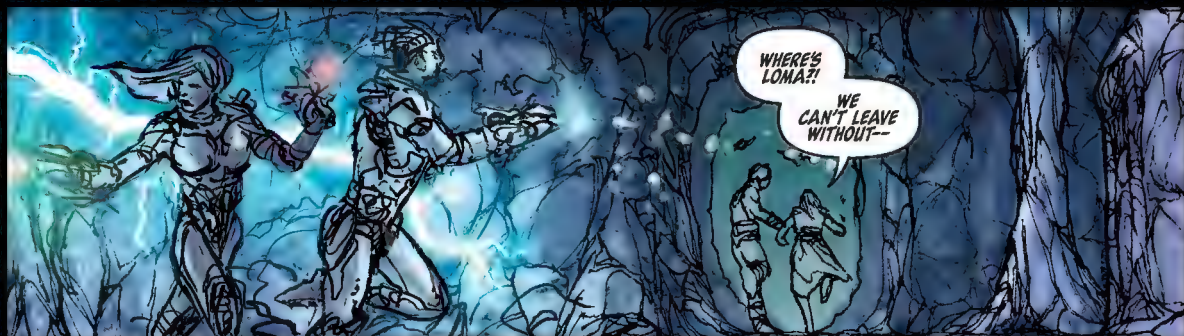


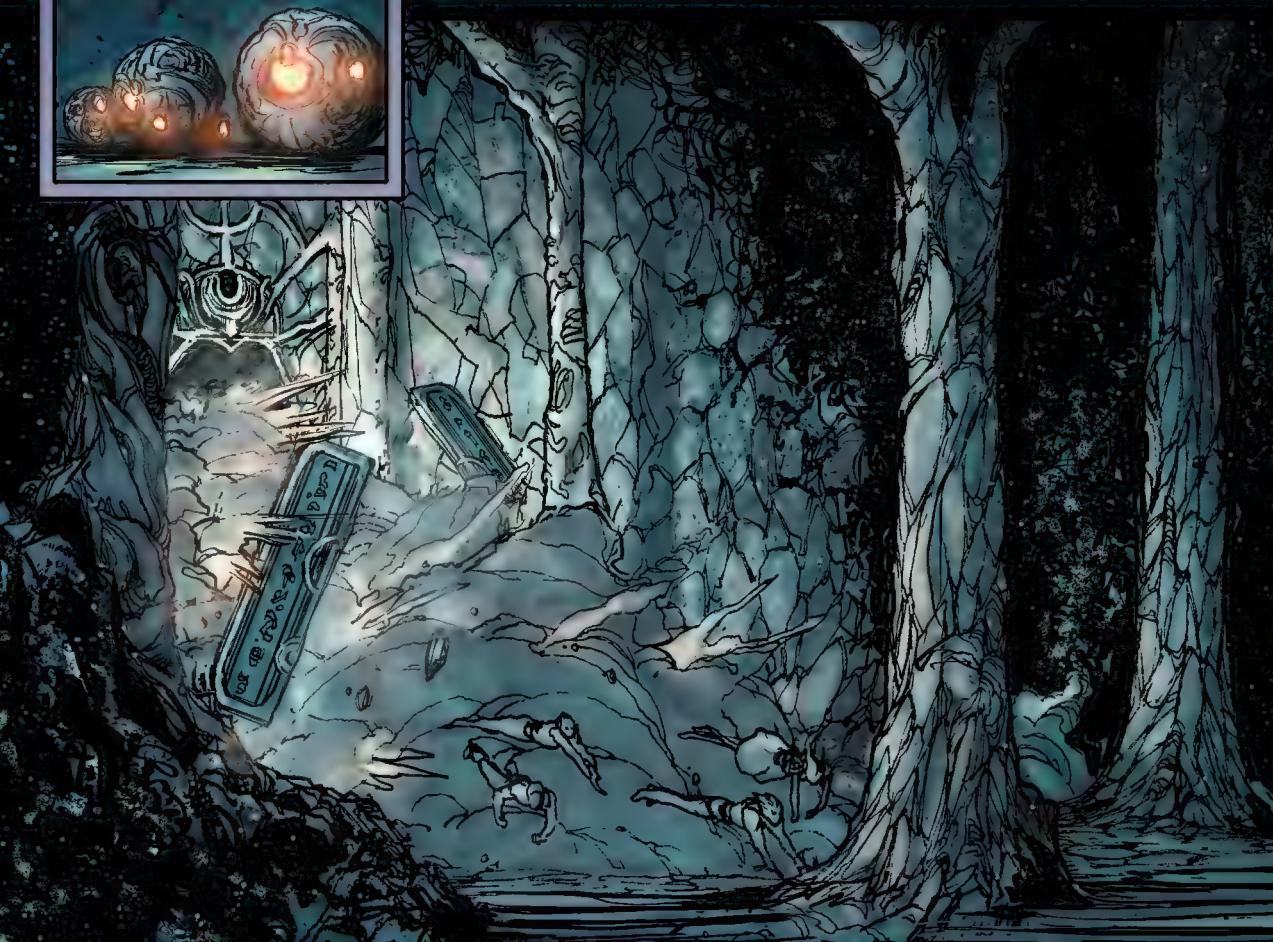
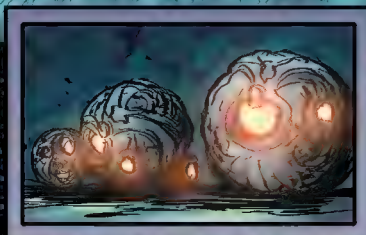
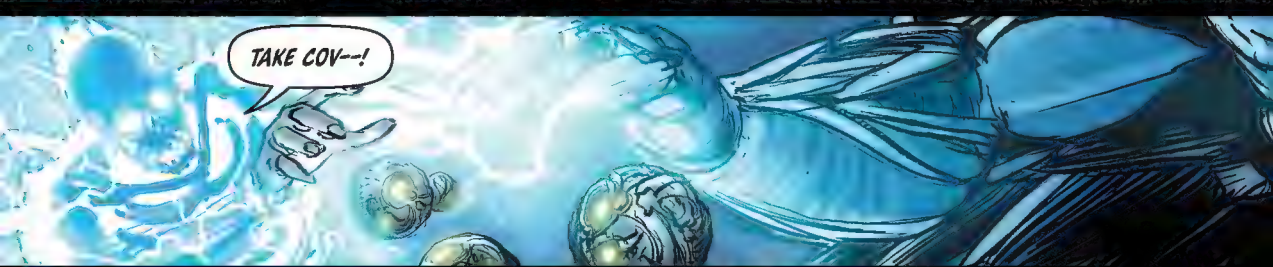
--BACK!!

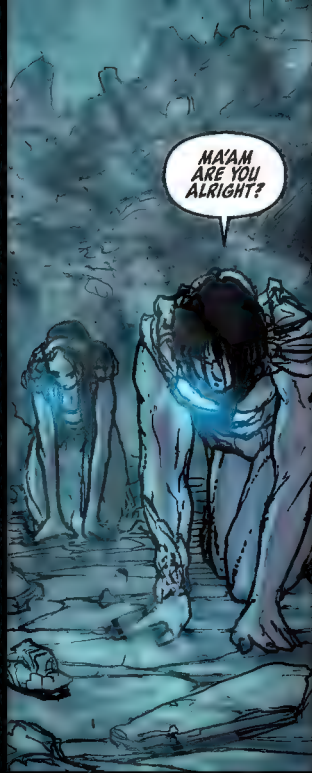














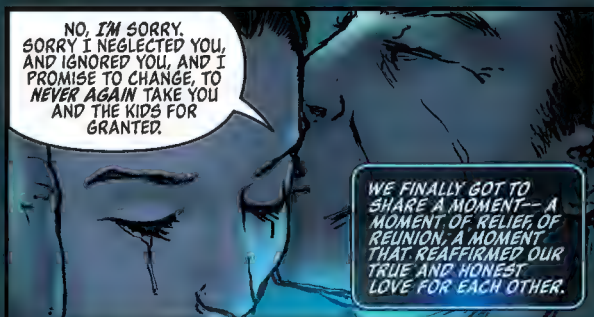
I'D FINALLY GOTTEN
TO TRULY BE THE HERO.
TO RESCUE MY
DAMSEL IN DISTRESS.





TO BE WORTHY OF
STARRING IN ONE
OF HER STORIES.

LOMA, I'M
SORRY I--



NO, I'M SORRY.
SORRY I NEGLECTED YOU,
AND IGNORED YOU, AND I
PROMISE TO CHANGE, TO
NEVER AGAIN TAKE YOU
AND THE KIDS FOR
GRANTED.

WE FINALLY GOT TO
SHARE A MOMENT-- A
MOMENT OF RELIEF OF
REUNION; A MOMENT
THAT REAFFIRMED OUR
TRUE AND HONEST
LOVE FOR EACH OTHER.



BUT, UNFORTUNATELY,
THE MOMENT WAS
ALL TOO BRIEF.

UM,
COUNCILOR?
I THINK YOU
SHOULD
GET--



OH, #@!%.

IT BE CONTINUED...



#4
OF 4
COVER A

MICHAEL TURNER'S
**FATHOM
BLUE
DESCENT**





#4
OF 4
COVER B

MICHAEL TURNER'S
FATHOM
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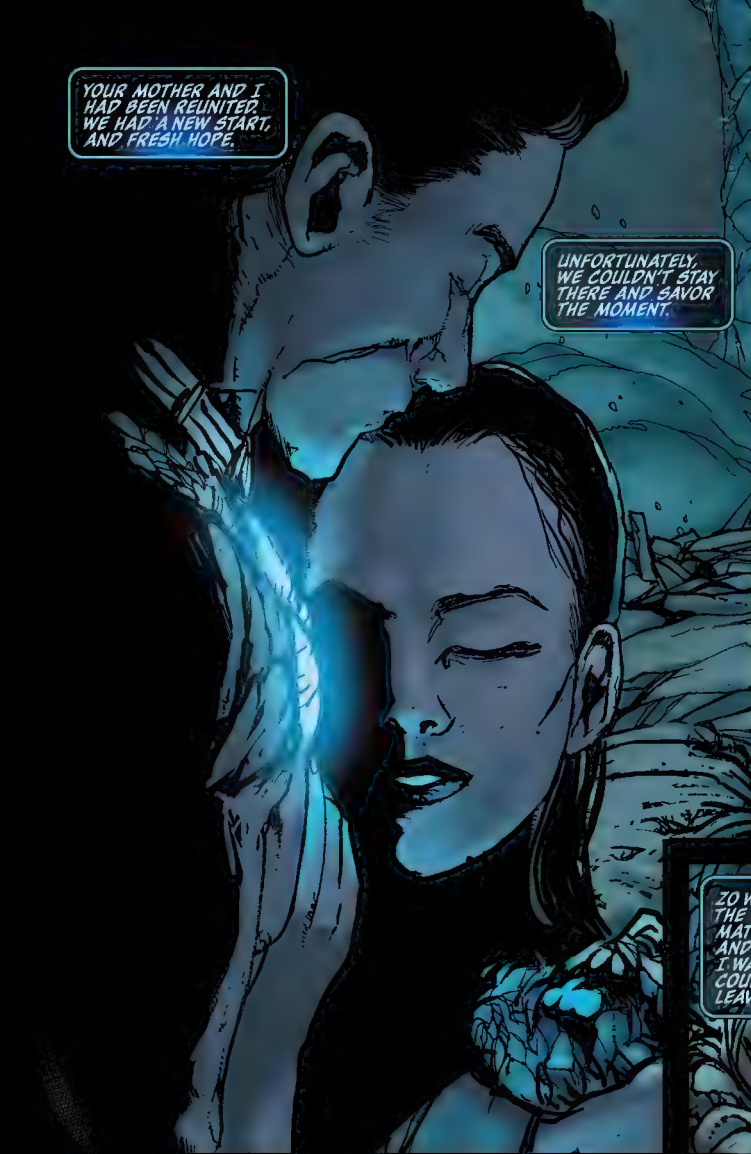
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YOUR MOTHER AND I
HAD BEEN REUNITED.
WE HAD A NEW START,
AND FRESH HOPE.

UNFORTUNATELY,
WE COULDN'T STAY
THERE AND SAVOR
THE MOMENT.



RAGHER WASN'T
COMPLETELY FREE
YET, BUT EVEN IN HIS
WEAKENED STATE...

...THAT RUBBLE
WOULDN'T HOLD
HIM FOR LONG.

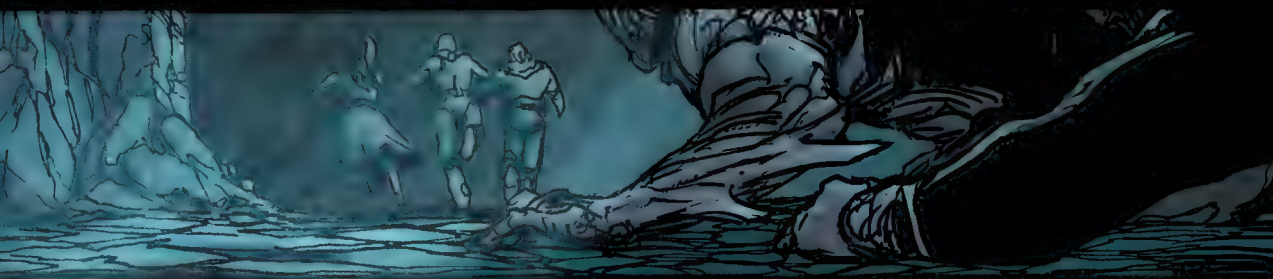
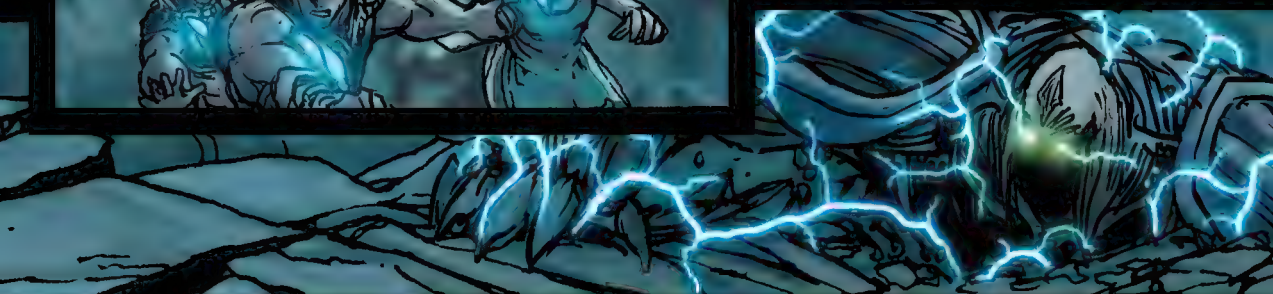


ZO WAS DOWN FOR
THE COUNT, BUT NO
MATTER HOW ANGRY
AND DISAPPOINTED
I WAS WITH HIM, I
COULDN'T JUST
LEAVE HIM THERE



WE'VE GOT TO
BRING ZO.

THERE'S NO
TIME, COUNCILOR!
MOVE. NOW!



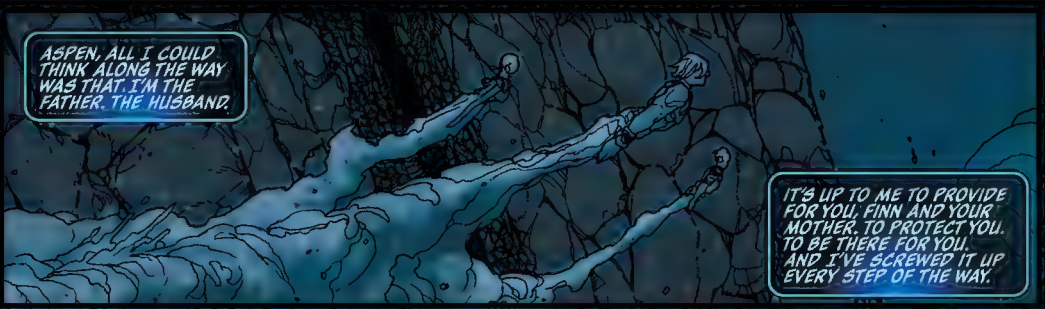


WE RACED BACK THROUGH THE PATH TO THE REALM OF THE BLUE, HOPING THAT WE'D FIND REFUGE, REINFORCEMENT AND SAFETY THERE.

FOR SOME REASON, ON THE WAY BACK IT WAS INSANELY EASY. NONE OF THE HORRORS WE'D ENCOUNTERED, ON THE WAY DOWN WERE PRESENT.

MAYBE THE PATH IS DESIGNED ONLY TO KEEP INTERLOPERS OUT, NOT TO KEEP CAPTIVES IN? OR, PERHAPS RAGHER WAS SOMEHOW ABLE TO PROTECT US BY SHIELDING EILAH FROM THE LETHAL ASSAULTS THESE CAVERNS HELD, IN ORDER TO MAKE SURE HIS PRIZE SURVIVED?

IN ANY CASE, WE KNEW THAT HE WASN'T FAR BEHIND US. I COULD PRACTICALLY SMELL THE BASTARD BREATHING DOWN MY NECK.



ASPEN, ALL I COULD
THINK ALONG THE WAY
WAS THAT I'M THE
FATHER, THE HUSBAND.

IT'S UP TO ME TO PROVIDE
FOR YOU, FINN AND YOUR
MOTHER. TO PROTECT YOU.
TO BE THERE FOR YOU.
AND I'VE SCREWED IT UP
EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

BUT I WASN'T GOING
TO LET THAT HAPPEN
ANYMORE.



IT WAS TIME TO TAKE CONTROL
TO TURN THIS SHIP AROUND TO
DO EVERYTHING I COULD TO
KEEP OUR FAMILY TOGETHER.

I WANT EVERY
MAN AND WOMAN
YOU'VE GOT, THE ENTIRE
FORCE, TO MEET US
AT MY HOME.

COUNCILOR, I
DON'T HAVE THE
AUTHORITY
TO--

AS A MEMBER
OF THE COUNCIL, I'M
GIVING YOU THAT
AUTHORITY.



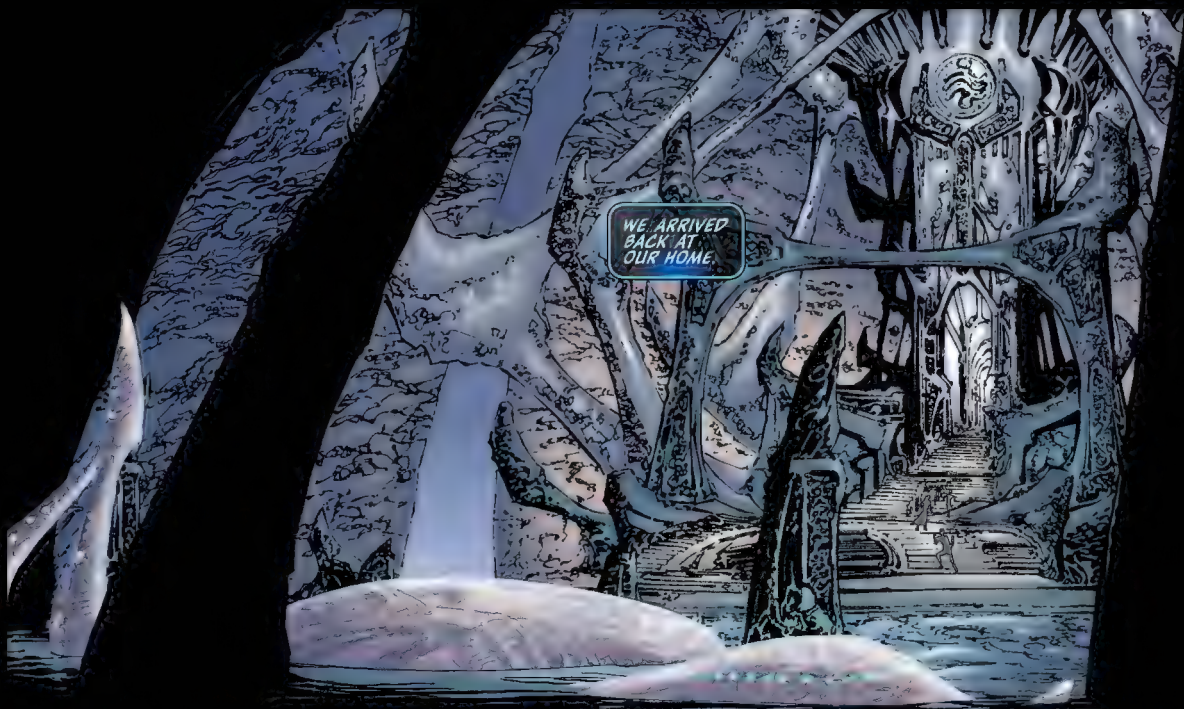
IN FACT,
I HEREBY OFFICIALLY
APPOINT YOU THE ELITE
COMMANDER OF THE DAMN
COUNCIL DEFENSE FORCES IF IT
HELPS. BUT I WANT MY WIFE
AND CHILDREN TO BE KEPT
SAFE NO MATTER
WHAT!



BETWEEN
THE BLACK AND
ZO'S DISSIDENT GROUP,
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE
A LOT OF COMPANY
SOON.



BASE, THIS IS
CANNON...



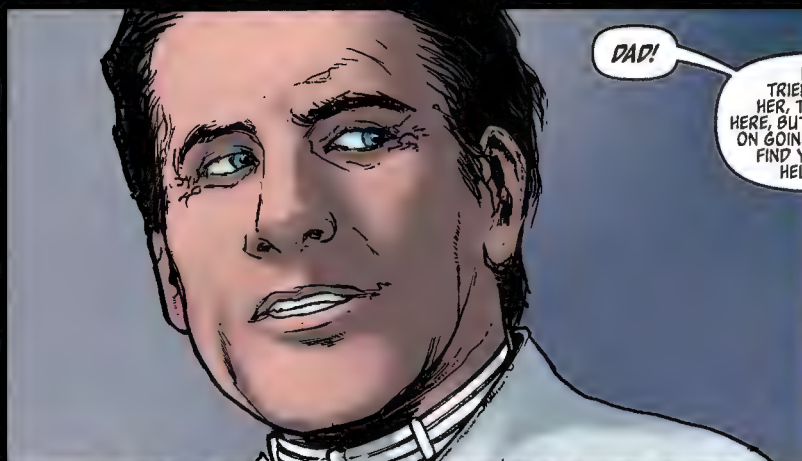
WE ARRIVED
BACK AT
OUR HOME.



I KNEW I HAD TO
MOVE QUICKLY.

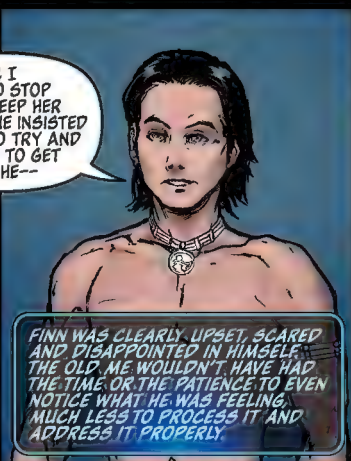


ASPEN?
FINN?

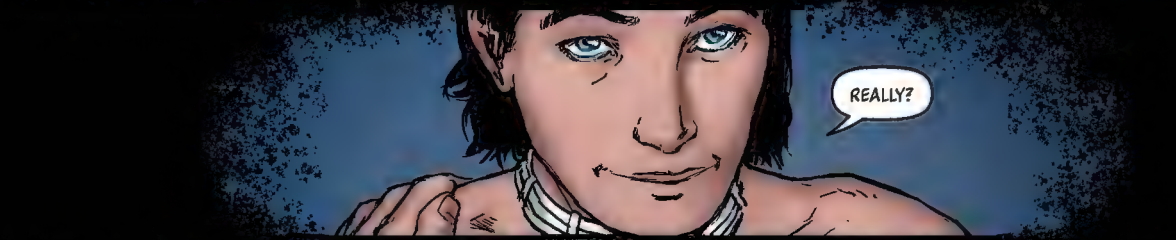


DAD!

DAD, I
TRIED TO STOP
HER, TO KEEP HER
HERE, BUT SHE INSISTED
ON GOING TO TRY AND
FIND YOU, TO GET
HELP. SHE--

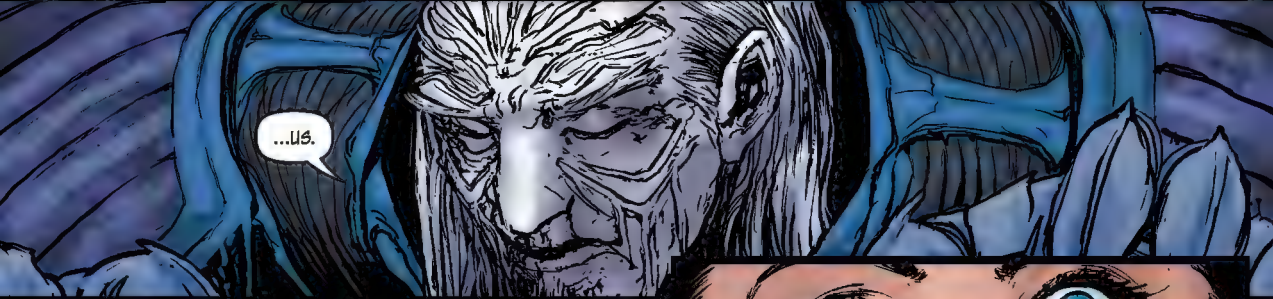
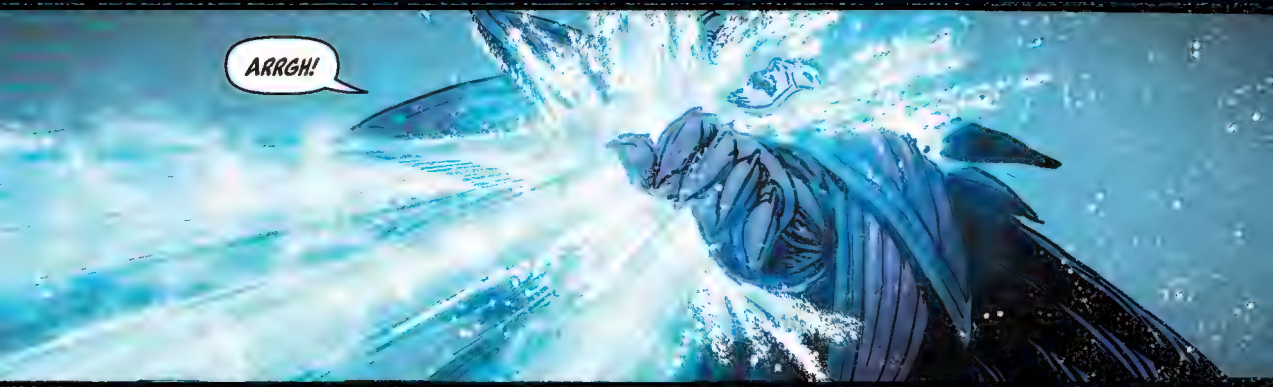


FINN WAS CLEARLY UPSET, SCARED
AND DISAPPOINTED IN HIMSELF.
THE OLD ME WOULDN'T HAVE HAD
THE TIME OR THE PATIENCE TO EVEN
NOTICE WHAT HE WAS FEELING,
MUCH LESS TO PROCESS IT AND
ADDRESS IT PROPERLY.



BUT IT WAS
TOO LATE



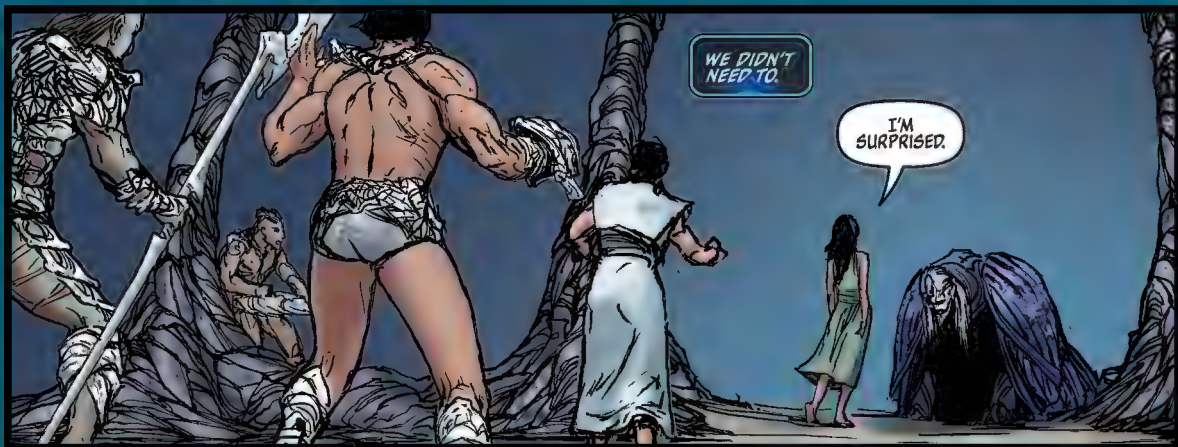


THE FIRST OF CANNON'S SOLDIERS HAD ARRIVED. NOT MANY YET, JUST THOSE WHO HAD BEEN STATIONED NEARBY, BUT IT WAS ENOUGH TO TAKE ON THE DEPLETED RAGHER IF WE NEEDED TO.

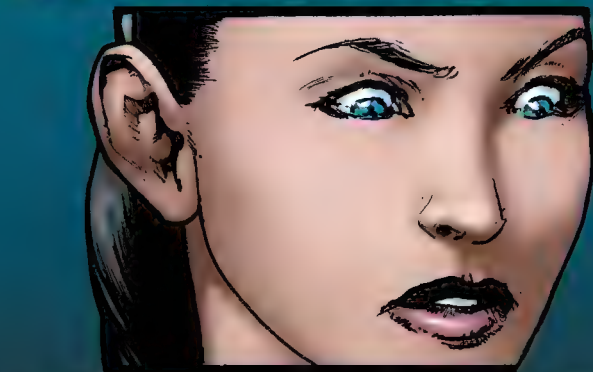


WE DIDN'T NEED TO.

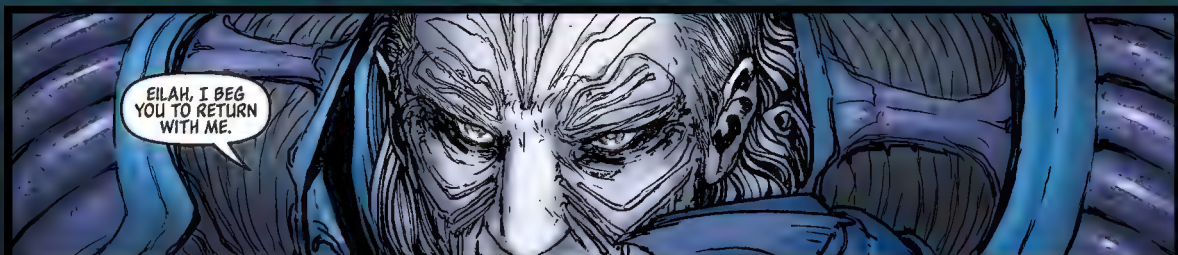
I'M SURPRISED.



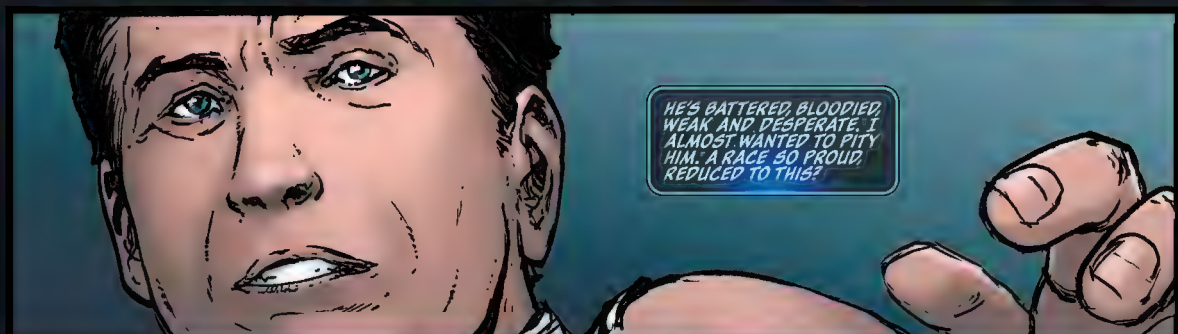
YOU'RE ACTUALLY APPEARING WHEN I'M NOT ASLEEP AND DEFENSELESS?

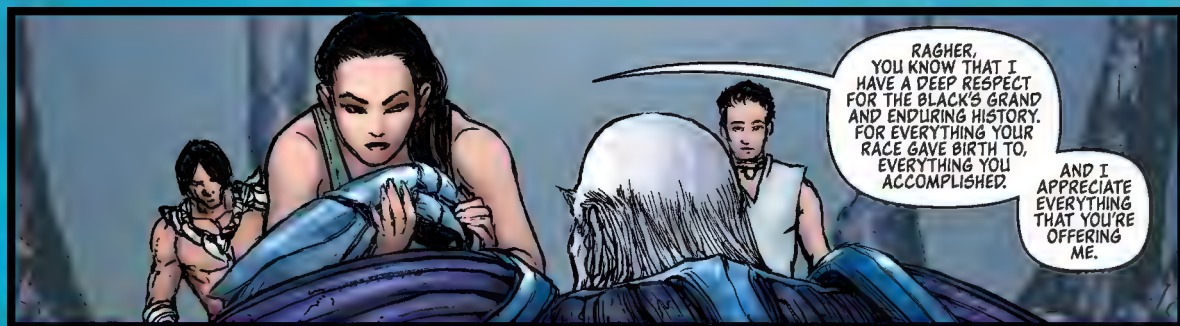


EILAH, I BEG YOU TO RETURN WITH ME.



HE'S BATTERED, BLOODIED, WEAK AND DESPERATE. I ALMOST WANTED TO PITY HIM. A RACE SO PROUD, REDUCED TO THIS?





RAGHER,
YOU KNOW THAT I
HAVE A DEEP RESPECT
FOR THE BLACK'S GRAND
AND ENDURING HISTORY.
FOR EVERYTHING YOUR
RACE GAVE BIRTH TO,
EVERYTHING YOU
ACCOMPLISHED.

AND I
APPRECIATE
EVERYTHING
THAT YOU'RE
OFFERING
ME.

BUT I WON'T BE
A PRISONER. I WON'T
BE A POSSESSION. AND
I WON'T BE A PARTY
TO GENOCIDE.

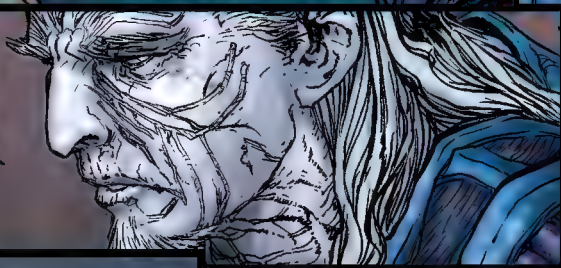
YOU'RE
DOOMING YOUR
PEOPLE.

MY PEOPLE
WILL FIND A WAY. A
PEACEFUL WAY.

IN EVERY
STORY, A HERO
ALWAYS RISES AND
CHANGES THEIR DESTINY,
AND SO IT WILL BE WITH
THE HUMANS AND
THE BLUE.



AT LEAST
ALLOW ASPEN
TO COME BACK
WITH ME. FOR A
SHORT WHILE.



TO SPEND
TIME WITH HER
FATHER.

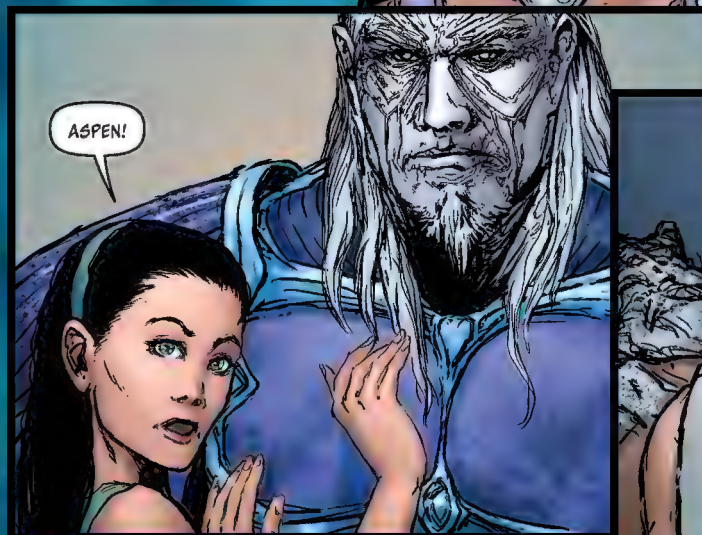


THINK OF
WHAT SHE COULD
GROW UP TO BE, WHAT
SHE COULD ACCOMPLISH, IF
WE OF THE BLACK CAN TRULY
TEACH HER, SHAPE HER,
HELP HER REACH HER
FULL POTENTIAL.

PERHAPS
SHE CAN BECOME
THAT HERO. THE ONE
WHO SAVES THE
WORLD.

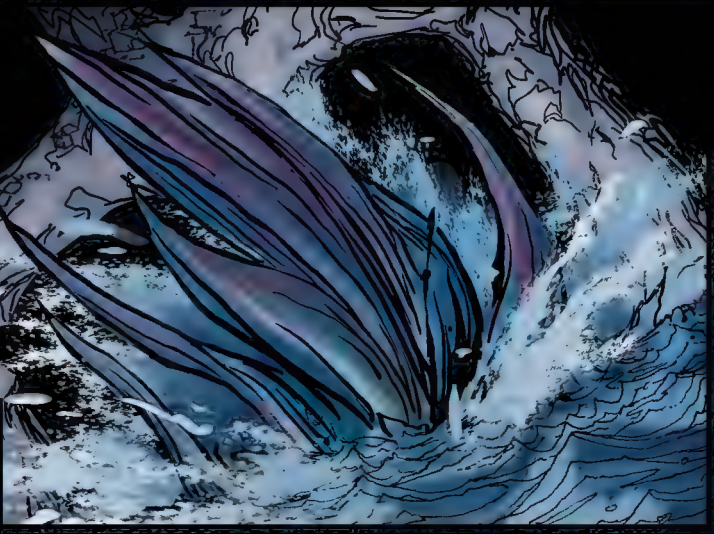


YOU WOULDN'T
MAKE HER A HERO.
YOU'D MAKE HER A
MASS MURDERER. I--
LOMA AND I-- WE
WON'T LET THAT
HAPPEN.



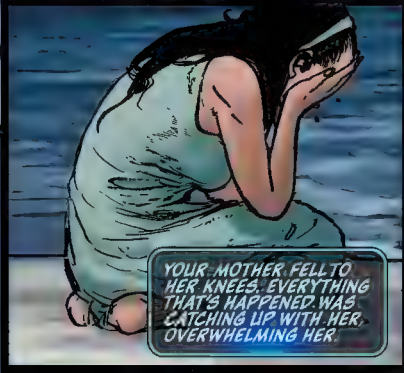


THAT'S WHEN ZO
AND HIS GROUP
OF DISSIPENTS
ARRIVED— AND
ATTACKED.



SHOTS RANG OUT, AS CANNON'S MEN ATTEMPTED TO PROTECT US FROM ZO'S ATTACK.

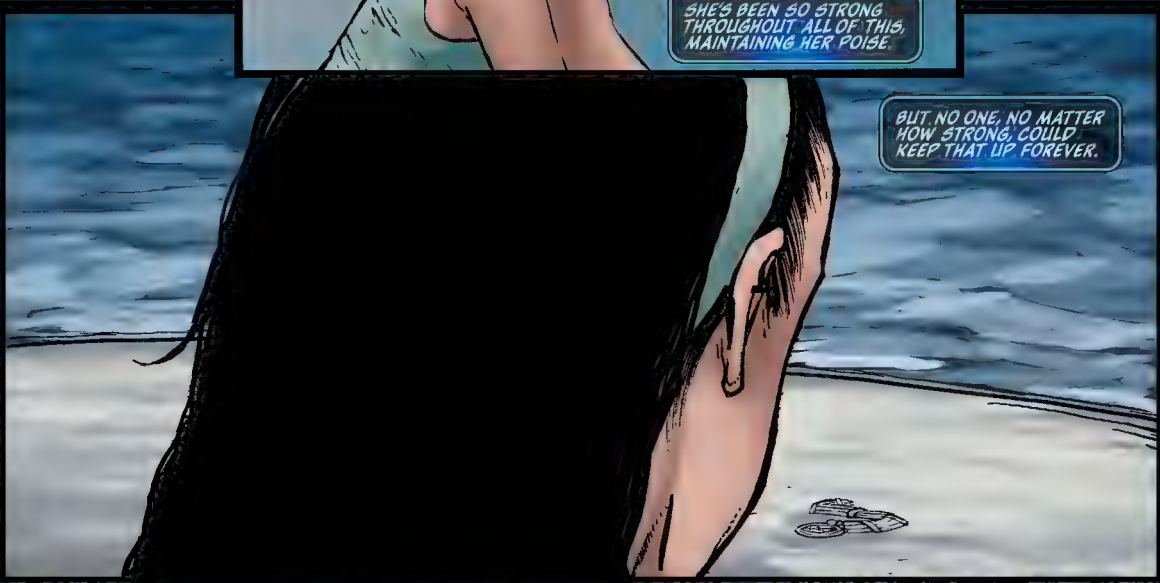
RAGHER SLIPPED AWAY AS A MASSIVE FIREFIGHT BROKE OUT BETWEEN OUR TWO FACTIONS OF THE BLUE.



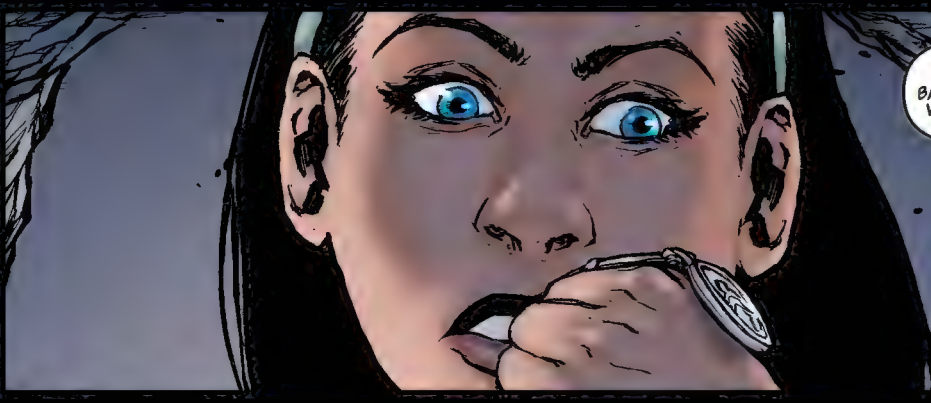
YOUR MOTHER FELL TO HER KNEES. EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED WAS CATCHING UP WITH HER, OVERWHELMING HER.



SHE'S BEEN SO STRONG THROUGHOUT ALL OF THIS, MAINTAINING HER POISE.



BUT NO ONE, NO MATTER HOW STRONG, COULD KEEP THAT UP FOREVER.



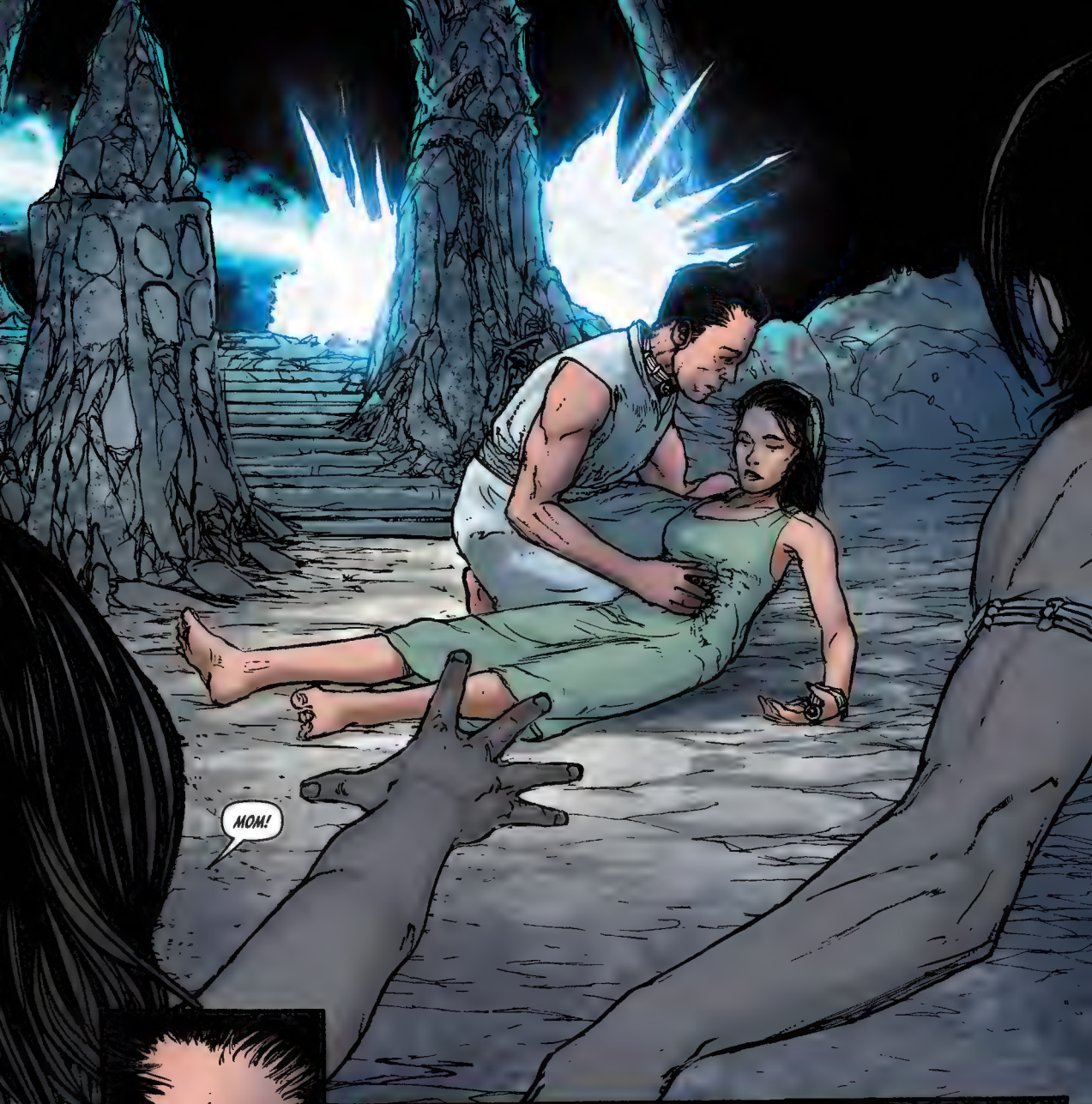
RAGHER MUST HAVE BROUGHT THIS BACK UP WITH HIM, BUT WHY? AND WHAT'S HE DONE TO IT?

CHOOM



UNNGH—

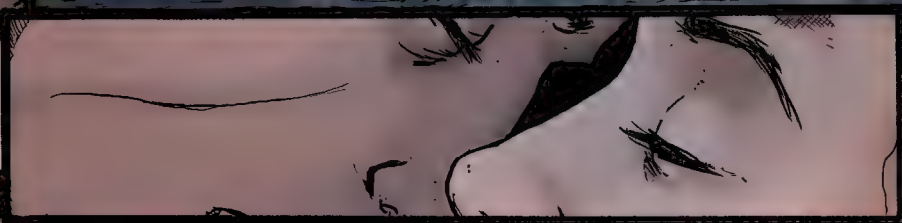
EILAH!

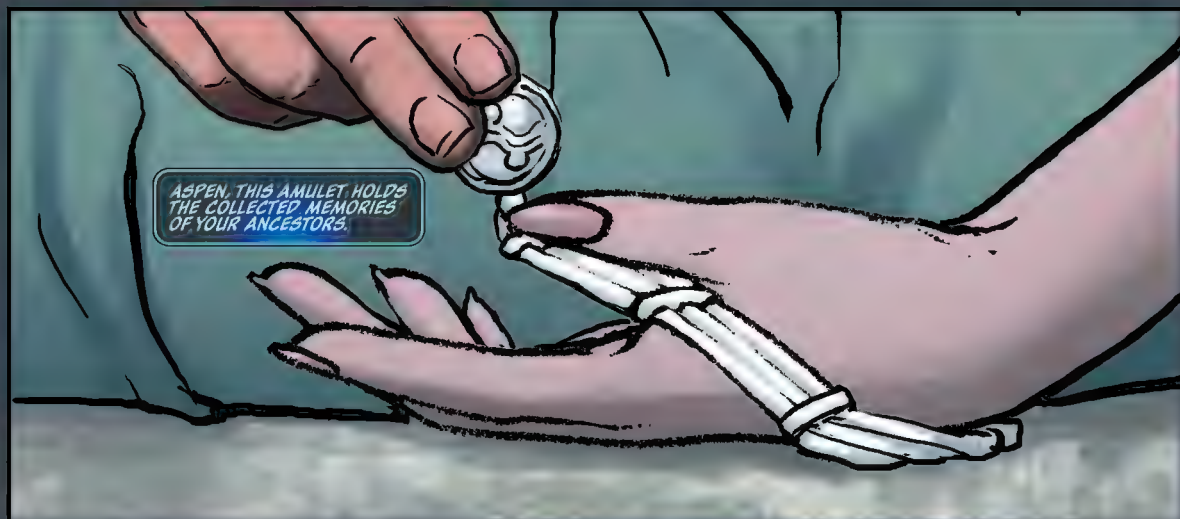


MOM!

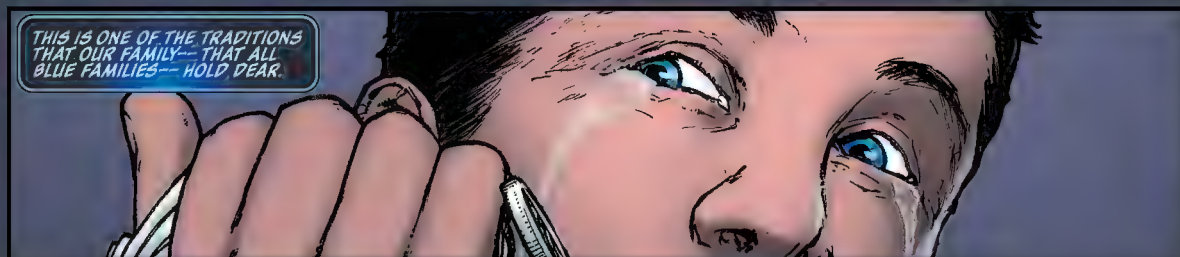


I'M SO
SORRY.

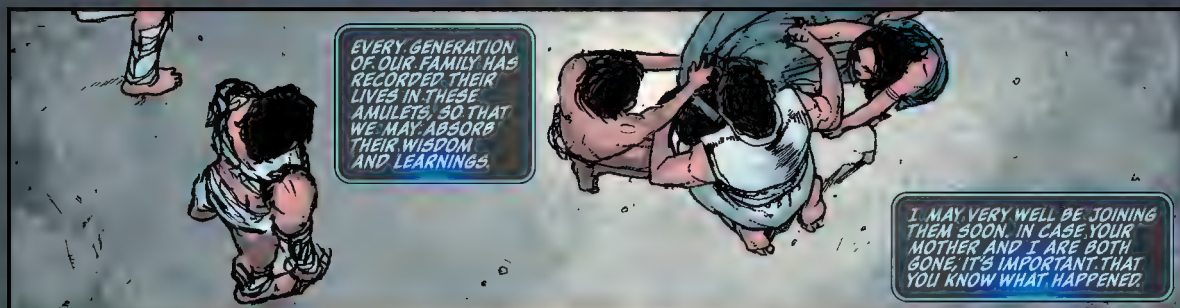




ASPEN, THIS AMULET HOLDS
THE COLLECTED MEMORIES
OF YOUR ANCESTORS.



THIS IS ONE OF THE TRADITIONS
THAT OUR FAMILY-- THAT ALL
BLUE FAMILIES-- HOLD DEAR.



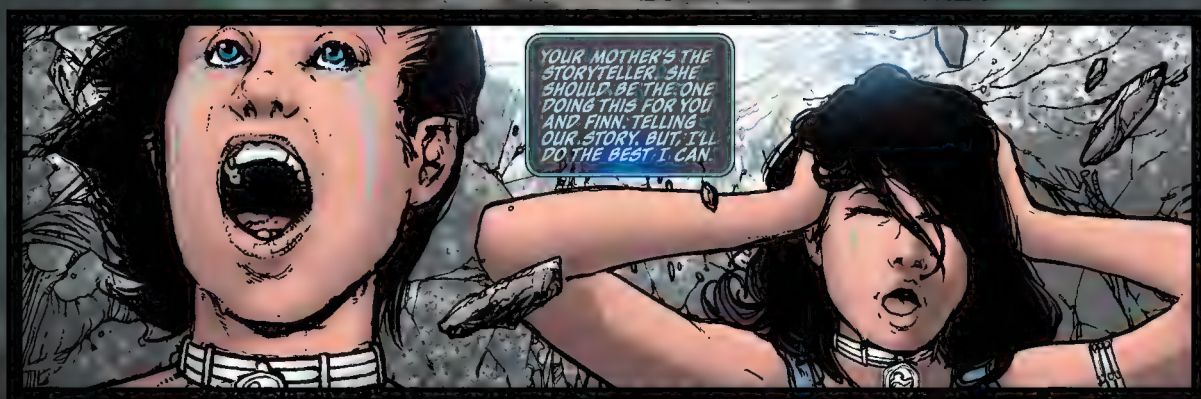
EVERY GENERATION
OF OUR FAMILY HAS
RECORDED THEIR
LIVES IN THESE
AMULETS, SO THAT
WE MAY ABSORB
THEIR WISDOM
AND LEARNINGS.

I MAY VERY WELL BE JOINING
THEM SOON. IN CASE YOUR
MOTHER AND I ARE BOTH
GONE, IT'S IMPORTANT THAT
YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.

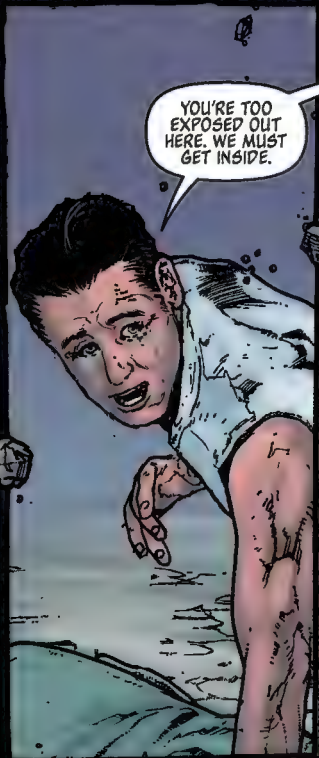


THERE ISN'T TIME FOR
ME TO ACTUALLY SIT
DOWN AND TELL YOU
ALL OF IT, BUT I CAN
EMBED IT HERE AT THE
SPEED OF THOUGHT.

I'LL KEEP THE CONNECTION
OPEN FOR AS LONG AS I
CAN, RECORD AS MUCH
AS I CAN, AND PRAY TO
WHATEVER GODS I HAVE
LEFT THAT YOU FIND THIS
HISTORY AND LEARN FROM
IT, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.



YOUR MOTHER'S THE
STORYTELLER. SHE
SHOULD BE THE ONE
DOING THIS FOR YOU
AND FINN. TELLING
OUR STORY, BUT I'LL
DO THE BEST I CAN.



YOU'RE TOO EXPOSED OUT HERE. WE MUST GET INSIDE.

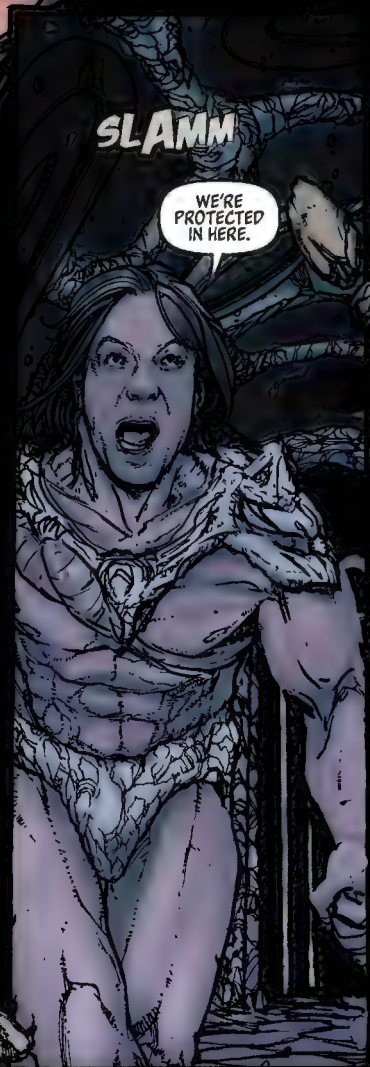


ASPEN! FINN! PLEASE, WE HAVE TO MOVE QUICKLY!



CANNON, INSIDE!

EVERYONE, INSIDE!



SLAMM

WE'RE PROTECTED IN HERE.



I KNOW YOU ARE FRIGHTENED, BUT PLEASE HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY TO YOU NOW.



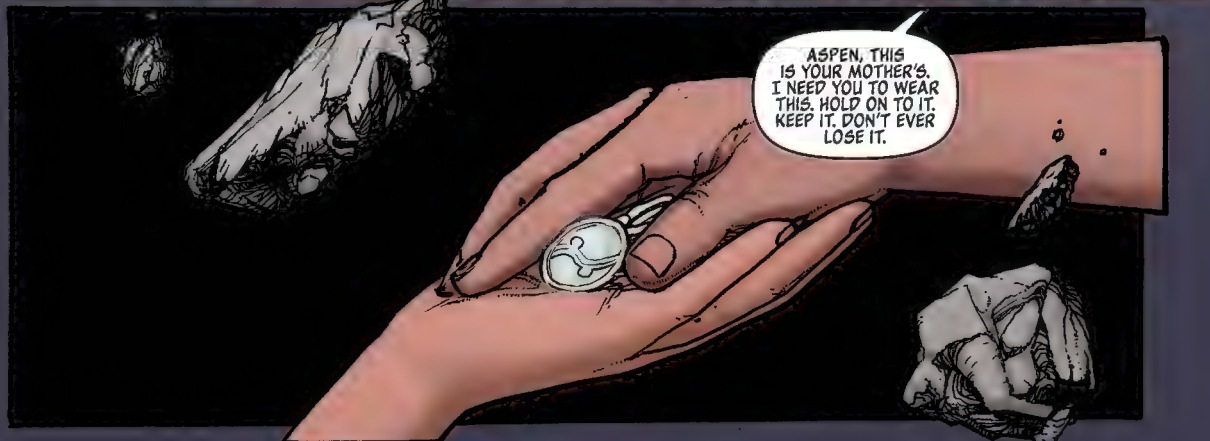
ASPEN, FINN, I'M SO SORRY. SORRY ABOUT YOUR MOTHER. SORRY ABOUT ALL THE TIME I'VE SPENT OBSESSED WITH MY WORK, SPENT FOCUSING ON THINGS OTHER THAN MY FAMILY. OTHER THAN YOU.

IF WE MAKE IT OUT OF HERE, I PROMISE YOU, EVERYTHING WILL BE DIFFERENT. YOU TWO WILL BE MY FOCUS IN LIFE, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I--

CHILDREN, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, DON'T BE SCARED. DON'T BE AWED, BY ANYONE OR ANYTHING, EVEN IF THE BLACK THEMSELVES WERE TO COME AFTER YOU, YOU NEED TO REALIZE THAT YOU HAVE POWER. YOU HAVE LEVERAGE. YOU HAVE CONTROL. YOU CAN USE THAT POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD, SAVE THE WORLD, MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE.



NEVER FORGET THAT.



ASPEN, THIS IS YOUR MOTHER'S. I NEED YOU TO WEAR THIS. HOLD ON TO IT. KEEP IT. DON'T EVER LOSE IT.

A close-up of a hand holding a small, round object with a symbol on it. The object is held between the thumb and index finger. The background is dark and blurry.

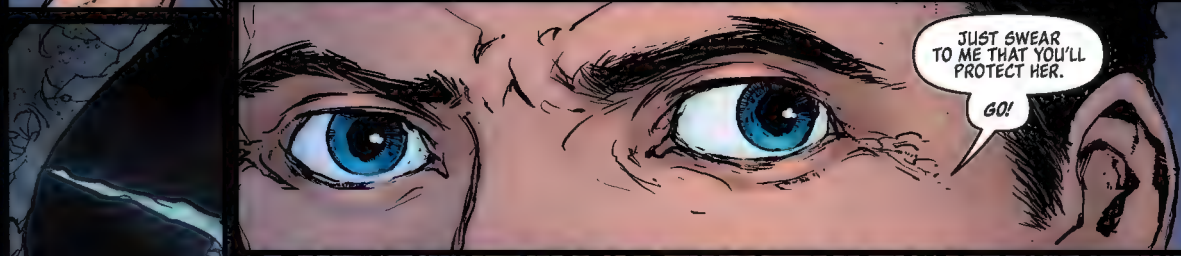


CANNON, YOU'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO GET ASPEN AND FINN OUT OF HERE. HIDE THEM IN THE SURFACE WORLD. LET THEM SEE THAT THE HUMANS AREN'T WHAT ZO AND RASHER MAKE THEM OUT TO BE.

HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THAT THERE'S GOOD, AND BEAUTY AND HOPE AMONG THE HUMANS. DO NOT *EVER* LET THE DISSIDENTS OR THE BLACK GET THEIR HANDS ON MY CHILDREN!

COUNCILOR, SHE'S NOT YOUR--

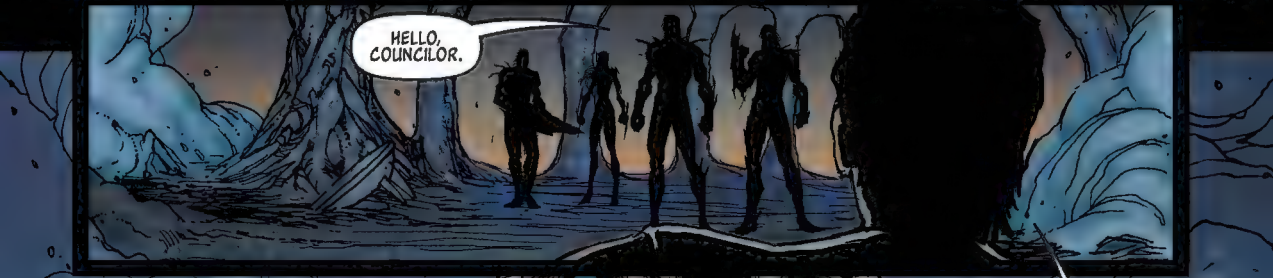
I RAISED HER, I TAUGHT HER, I SHAPED HER INTO BEING WHO SHE IS. HER BLOOD MAY BE OF THE BLACK, BUT THE HEART AND SOUL IT PUMPS THROUGH ARE *MINE*.



JUST SWEAR TO ME THAT YOU'LL PROTECT HER.

GO!







SO NICE
TO SEE YOU
AGAIN.

IT WAS
YOU UNDER THE
MASK? YOU WERE
WITH US THE
WHOLE---?!

LOMA!



YOU LEFT ME
FOR DEAD!

I HAD NO
CHOICE.

YOU JUST
HAD TO PLAY THE
HERO, DIDN'T YOU, LOMA?
YOU HAD TO SCREW IT ALL
UP. EILAH COULD'VE STAYED
WITH THEM, HELPED THE
BLACK DESTROY
HUMANITY.



SHE COULD'VE NOT
ONLY STILL BEEN ALIVE,
BUT SHE COULD'VE
SAVED US ALL.



BUT YOU JUST
COULDN'T RESIST
ACTING LIKE ONE OF
YOUR STORYTIME
HEROES, COULD
YOU?



IT'S UNFORTUNATE
THAT THE WOMAN IS GONE,
BUT WE STILL HAVE THE GIRL.
PERHAPS SHE CAN SERVE THE
SAME FUNCTION FOR THE BLACK.
AT THE VERY LEAST, SHE CAN
BE A POWERFUL BARGAINING
CHIP WITH THEM.

DISPOSE OF HIM.
LET'S GET MOVING
BEFORE MORE OF THE
GUARD ARRIVES.



ZO, I KNOW
YOU'RE NOT GOING
TO DO THIS. NO MATTER
WHAT POLITICS MAY
NOW DIVIDE US--



IT'S NOT JUST
POLITICS, LOMA.
IT'S THE FUTURE
OF THE BLUE.



WORKING WITH THE
DISSIDENTS, ARGUING FOR
WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN, THAT'S
ONE THING. I GET THAT.
BUT THIS? MURDER?
DESTRUCTION?



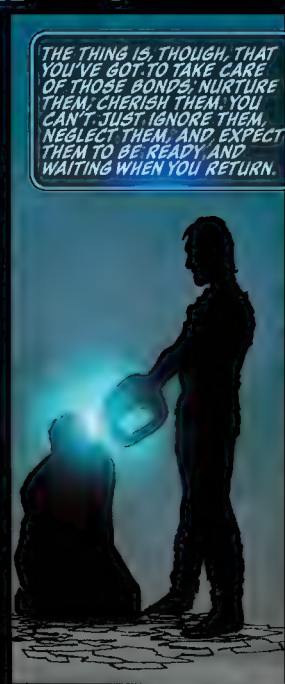
THIS
ISN'T YOU,
ZO. I KNOW
IT'S NOT.

I STILL
BELIEVE IN YOU.
I'M NOT GIVING
UP ON YOU.

THAT GUY HOLDING THE
GUN-- HE'S MY BEST
FRIEND. SINCE WE
WERE LITTLE KIDS. ME?



I'M THE ONE HE'S
POINTING IT AT. THE
BONDS OF LOVE
AND FRIENDSHIP
ARE SUPPOSED TO
BE STRONGER THAN
ANYTHING... RIGHT?



THE THING IS, THOUGH, THAT
YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE
OF THOSE BONDS. NURTURE
THEM, CHERISH THEM. YOU
CAN'T JUST IGNORE THEM,
NEGLECT THEM, AND EXPECT
THEM TO BE READY AND
WAITING WHEN YOU RETURN.

FAMILIES, FRIENDSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, LOVE, THEY'RE LIKE MUSCLES— IF YOU LEAVE THEM ALONE FOR LONG ENOUGH, IF YOU POUR ALL OF YOUR SOUL AND YOUR ENERGY INTO WORK, OR HOBBIES, OR OTHER DISTRACTIONS— THOSE MUSCLES, THOSE RELATIONSHIPS, WILL ATROPHY, AND, IN THE END, YOU'LL BE LEFT WITH NOTHING.

LIKE I AM, RIGHT NOW.
TRAPPED. HELPLESS.

BUT THEN I LOOK AT
YOU AND FINN, SEE WHAT
GLORIOUS FUTURES YOU
COULD HAVE, AND, FOR
JUST A MOMENT, IN MY
MIND, I'M FREE.

FREE LIKE WHEN I WAS A
KID WHEN I HAD MY
WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF ME.

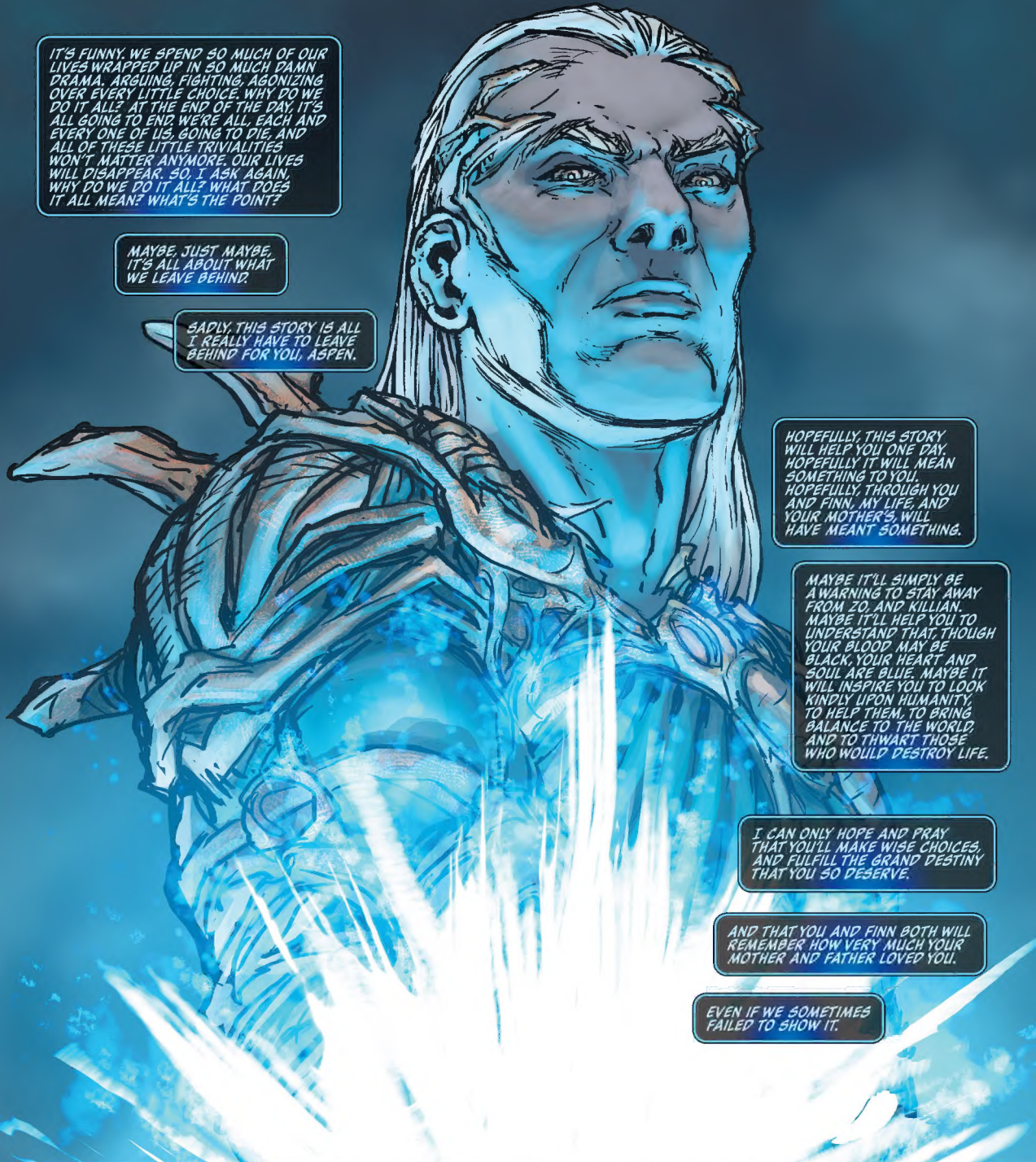
BUT THERE IS ONE LAST
THING I CAN TRY. ONE
LAST CHIP I CAN PLAY.

ASPEN,
REMEMBER
WHAT I SAID. YOU
HAVE THE LEVERAGE.
YOU HAVE THE
CONTROL.

IF THIS WERE ONE OF ELIAH'S STORIES, AND I WAS THE HERO, I'D BE ABLE TO MAKE SOME INCREDIBLE SPEECH THAT WOULD WIN OVER ZO'S HEART AND MIND. BUT I'VE DEBATED HIM ENOUGH TIMES TO KNOW THAT HE'S NOT GOING TO MOVE. I'M NOT GOING TO WIN THAT ARGUMENT.

YOU
HAVE THE
POWER.





IT'S FUNNY. WE SPEND SO MUCH OF OUR LIVES WRAPPED UP IN SO MUCH DAMN DRAMA. ARGUING, FIGHTING, AGONIZING OVER EVERY LITTLE CHOICE. WHY DO WE DO IT ALL? AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT'S ALL GOING TO END. WE'RE ALL, EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US, GOING TO DIE, AND ALL OF THESE LITTLE TRIVIALITIES WON'T MATTER ANYMORE. OUR LIVES WILL DISAPPEAR. SO, I ASK AGAIN, WHY DO WE DO IT ALL? WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN? WHAT'S THE POINT?

MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, IT'S ALL ABOUT WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND.

SADLY, THIS STORY IS ALL I REALLY HAVE TO LEAVE BEHIND FOR YOU, ASSEN.

HOPEFULLY, THIS STORY WILL HELP YOU ONE DAY. HOPEFULLY IT WILL MEAN SOMETHING TO YOU. HOPEFULLY, THROUGH YOU AND FINN, MY LIFE, AND YOUR MOTHER'S, WILL HAVE MEANT SOMETHING.

MAYBE IT'LL SIMPLY BE A WARNING TO STAY AWAY FROM ZO, AND KILLIAN. MAYBE IT'LL HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND THAT, THOUGH YOUR BLOOD, MAY BE BLACK, YOUR HEART AND SOUL ARE BLUE. MAYBE IT WILL INSPIRE YOU TO LOOK KINDLY UPON HUMANITY, TO HELP THEM, TO BRING BALANCE TO THE WORLD, AND TO THWART THOSE WHO WOULD DESTROY LIFE.

I CAN ONLY HOPE AND PRAY THAT YOU'LL MAKE WISE CHOICES, AND FULFILL THE GRAND DESTINY THAT YOU SO DESERVE.

AND THAT YOU AND FINN BOTH WILL REMEMBER HOW VERY MUCH YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER LOVED YOU.

EVEN IF WE SOMETIMES FAILED TO SHOW IT.



A full-page comic book illustration with a monochromatic blue color scheme. At the top, two characters are shown in mid-air, appearing to fly or fall through a turbulent, swirling energy field. The character on the left is in a dynamic, forward-leaning pose, while the one on the right is more hunched. Below them, a large, bright, circular energy burst dominates the center of the page. At the bottom, a third character is seen from behind, running or jumping towards the viewer. The background is filled with intricate, radiating line work that creates a sense of intense energy and movement.

AFTER HEARING THESE STORIES, YOU MAY LOOK UPON YOUR MOTHER AND I WITH LOVE OR YOU MAY LOOK UPON US WITH PITY OR WITH SCORN AND DISDAIN. THE THING IS, WHAT YOU THINK OF US, OF THE CHOICES WE MADE, IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER. BECAUSE OUR LIVES ARE OVER. WE'RE DEAD AND GONE. NONE OF THIS IS ABOUT US ANYMORE. IT'S NEVER ABOUT THE LIVING. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FUTURE WE CAN CREATE.

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU, ASPEN.

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU...



WHAT REALLY HAPPENED
HERE, ALL THOSE YEARS
AGO? WHO WERE THEY?

HOW DID IT
ALL GO SO
INCREDIBLY
WRONG?

I HAVE A FEW MEMORIES, BUT IT'S
ALL JUMBLED, RANDOM SCRAPS OF
IMAGES FLOATING IN MY MIND, AND
NO ONE WHO'S STILL ALIVE SEEMS
TO KNOW THE COMPLETE TRUTH.



I HOPE THAT ONE DAY, I CAN
FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO
THEM, AND WHY, THAT COULD
CHANGE EVERYTHING.



THEIR STORY HAS TO BE OUT
THERE SOMEWHERE, I'VE
JUST GOT TO FIND IT.